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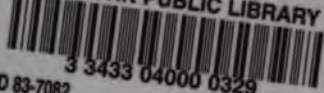
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JACK LORIMER'S "CHAMPIONS"



WINN STANDISH

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JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

**THE
JACK LORIMER SERIES**

By WINN STANDISH

Each one vol., large 12mo, cloth, illus-
trated, per volume, \$1.50

**CAPTAIN JACK LORIMER
JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS**

L. C. PAGE & COMPANY
New England Building, Boston, Mass.



"JACK GOT HIS EYE ON THE BALL AND DROVE OUT A HOT LINER."

FRANZ
WINNER'S
RECIPIES

FOR
LAND AND LAKE

By

John S. Smith

CHIEF OF THE U. S. ARMY

PUBLISHED BY

THE K. & S. CO.



LONDON

W. & C. COMPANY

1907



"JACK GOT HIS EYE ON THE BALL AND DROVE OUT A HOT LINER."

THE
NEW
EDITION.

OF
THE LAND

OF THE
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OF THE
NEW

1877



JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

**OR
SPORTS ON LAND AND LAKE**

**By
Winn Standish**
AUTHOR OF "CAPTAIN JACK LORIMER," ETC.

**ILLUSTRATED BY
JAMES K. BONNAR**



**BOSTON
L. C. PAGE & COMPANY
1907**

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TO
R. G. L.

FOREWORD

ALL my friends and acquaintances know that I am devoted to the furtherance of the great national game. My most intimate friends declare that I would rather talk baseball than eat or sleep. They are right; but fortunately for me I find that I can do both. I talk baseball at all my meals when I can find any one to talk to, and I am told that I talk it in my sleep.

As baseball editor for the Boston *Globe*, president of the New England League, — and after thirty-five years of work for the sport of which seventeen were spent as a player, — I may be pardoned for saying that I feel that I know the game. I have been very glad to act as official scorer for Captain Jack Lorimer and his friends of the High School League.

My good friend Henry Chadwick, "the father of baseball," editor of Spaulding's Guide, was interested to read the advance sheets of this story, and advises me that he joins with me in recommending "Captain Jack Lorimer's Champions" to all boys and girls who are fond of athletics and more particularly baseball.

▼

FOREWORD

As for myself I enjoyed every line of it; and I can truthfully say that I have never scored more interesting or better played games in all my experience of amateur baseball.

Cordially yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, likely reading "J. H. Hummer". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the text "Cordially yours,".

PREFACE

IN the opening volume of this series, entitled "Captain Jack Lorimer," I told how my hero and his friends organized an athletic club and built a gymnasium. This second volume pictures the doings of the Millvale boys, in and out of the gym, during the spring and summer following that splendid achievement.

As football was "the" game in the other book, so baseball is the chief interest in this story. But the true athlete should be interested in any and every sport that calls for strength, courage, judgment, and endurance. In these pages, therefore, Jack Lorimer's Champions figure as winners in boat-races, swimming-matches, and field and track events, as well as in baseball games; and in future volumes they may engage in every other wholesome pastime that Americans enjoy.

My acknowledgments are due the Boston *Sunday Herald*, in which originally appeared the stories that have been rewritten to form the Lorimer books; and Mr. T. H. Murnane, widely known

as the baseball editor of the Boston *Globe*, whose expert advice and assistance warrant me in assuring my friends that the games played by Captain Jack's nine are technically "right" and entirely "up-to-date."

I tender my thanks to the many readers also, girls as well as boys, who have had pleasant things to say about my work; and I hope that they may find "Jack Lorimer's Champions" an attractive portrait of the bright, brave, energetic, open-hearted, high-minded lad that I believe the typical American boy to be.

WINN STANDISH.

Boston, May 1, 1907.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. LADIES' DAY AT THE MILLVALE GYM .	1
II. WHEN CHAP STANLEY LOST HIS GAME .	12
III. THE TWO VISITORS FROM WINTERTON .	18
IV. ACCIDENTS THAT CRIPPLED MILLVALE .	26
V. AND NOBODY WINS IN THE NINTH .	39
VI. LOU MAINS RETURNS A CALL . .	50
VII. CAPTAIN REL'S EXCELLENT BEGINNING .	59
VIII. THE ASSISTANT MASCOT STAYS BEHIND .	67
IX. QUESTIONS OF PRINCIPLE — ANSWERED .	78
X. WARS AND RUMOURS OF WARS . .	86
XI. A RACE WITH AN ODD FINISH . .	94
XII. WHEN HEAVY HITTING DIDN'T COUNT .	103
XIII. WHY THE DERRY MASCOT RESIGNED .	112
XIV. THE BUSY AND IMPORTANT SENIORS .	120
XV. HOW ROYAL BURR WENT HUNTING .	128
XVI. DISCOVERED BY THE FAT BOY . .	136
XVII. THE CLUB'S FIRST FIELD GAMES .	144
XVIII. A RUN THAT WAS NOT SCHEDULED .	153
XIX. PRINCIPAL HORTON AND HIS NEPHEW .	160
XX. THE GENEROUS STRANGERS — AND OTHERS	166
XXI. SOMETHING TO WAKE THEM UP . .	176
XXII. GIRLS PRESENT, A BOY MISSING . .	184
XXIII. ON THE SEARCH FOR SENSATIONS .	193
XXIV. THAT PASSENGER OUTSIDE THE CAR .	201

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
XXV. IN THE NETTING WITH LOGAN . . .	208
XXVI. HOME BY A ROUNDABOUT WAY . . .	215
XXVII. WHEN LORIMER PUT HIMSELF OUT . . .	222
XXVIII. TOURNAMENTS ON LAND AND WATER . . .	231
XXIX. THE TUG-OF-WAR BOTH WON . . .	238
XXX. FOUL PLAY THAT DID NOT PROFIT . . .	247
XXXI. WOUNDED IN A GOOD CAUSE . . .	259
XXXII. MISS SECRETARY TAKES UP A DARE . . .	266
XXXIII. A RESCUE AND A SURRENDER . . .	274
XXXIV. THE FIGHTING CHANCE KNOCKED OUT . . .	281
XXXV. RAISING THE LEAGUE PENNANT . . .	294

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

	PAGE
"JACK GOT HIS EYE ON THE BALL AND DROVE OUT A HOT LINER" (<i>See page 43</i>) . . . <i>Frontispiece</i>	
"BACK AGAINST THE WALL THE VISITOR REELED" . . .	16
"'THREE CHEERS FOR JANUARY JONES!' ROARED OLD SETH LANARD"	76
"CAPTAIN JACK LORIMER . . . LIFTED HIS CAP REVERENTLY"	127
"CAPTAIN JACK HAD RISEN ABRUPTLY"	187
"LEANED OVER AND TOOK A FIRM GRIP ON THE COLLAR OF THE INVOLUNTARY AERONAUT"	206
"WITH THE MAD INSTINCT OF A HUNTED THING SHE . . . RACED"	273

JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

CHAPTER I

LADIES' DAY AT THE MILLVALE GYM

"THREE strikes — and out! That means your crowd, Jack Lorimer! Our time is coming, now! You made a fatal mistake when you set apart Thursday as Ladies' Day and opened the gym to us girls. Now we shall get into training and beat the Millvale Athletic Club and the high school teams at everything."

"Beginning when?"

"Beginning at once!" May Roxton retorted, merrily.

Not for a long time had Captain Jack seen May in such high, wild spirits as on this April afternoon. In public places she did most of her talking "with her eyelashes," as Terry McGrady said — which meant, of course, that she never behaved in a way to attract attention. But the sight of the bat to which Jack had hung his bookstrap seemed to set her eyes to dancing and her tongue proclaiming treason; and she looked so full of

2 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

mischievous that Lorimer, glancing at her soberly, shook his head and pretended to sigh.

"Spring's got into your system," he said. "What if we beckon that hand-organ man across the street and have a waltz on the curbstone? Or will you call out your nine, when we get to the gym, and play us a game of baseball?"

But May could easily find a reply to that.

"Miss Zaeder might not like us to play," she answered, gravely. "We haven't any rubber boots, you know." And then Jack had to laugh.

"Our diamond is pretty damp, in spots," he admitted. "We ought to steal a load of that sand Mr. Lanard is squandering on your tennis-court."

"I wish you had it all. I don't like a dirt court."

"Well, I suppose the poor man thought you wanted one in a hurry, to match our new boat-house, and this was the best he could do for you. By the way, does he know about Miss Zaeder, the Boston teacher that's coming down every Thursday to put you high school girls through a course of sprouts?"

"Yes." May smiled as she replied. "He asked if he might 'just stick his nose in the door, by and by, and kind of size her up.' So I told him to come in and meet her."

"How do you size her up?"

"Oh, I think she's fine!" May said, enthusi-

LADIES' DAY AT THE GYM 3

astically. "She's a jolly little woman, lively as a cricket, and busy as a bee, and bound to have things done as they should be. I got dismissed before intermission, you know, met her at the train, and took her home to luncheon, and then over to the gym, and, really, I was sorry to leave her."

"Especially since you had to go back to school, eh?" Lorimer suggested.

But May wouldn't admit that that had anything to do with it. She adored school, she said. She dreaded to think that in less than three months she would graduate.

"So do I," Captain Jack agreed. "Millvale High next year, without you — well, say!" But he couldn't say it, he was afraid he would find himself growing sentimental, and he abruptly changed the subject.

"See here," he cried, "I wonder if you girl athletes are strong enough to be nice to Archie Smith. And if that course of exercise seems too much like work, suppose at least that you stop calling him 'Soapy.'"

May tossed her head.

"I never used that abominable nickname. I don't talk slang," she answered.

"Well, some of the girls do, and I want to put an end to it. We're satisfied, I'm satisfied, that Smith has taken a complete turn-about, and it isn't fair to remind him of the time when he was

4 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

Rel Webb's hanger-on and ready to do his dirty work. We've let Archie in to the Athletic Club, and we're helping him every way we can, and you girls might do a great deal to strengthen his good resolutions."

May nodded thoughtfully.

"Kitty Ahearn could, anyway," she said. "He always admired Kitty. Yes, I'll remember, and we'll be nice to him.

"That leaves Rel Webb all alone, doesn't it?" she added. "Ben Cashman has dropped him completely, Lem Saunders is living in Boston, and if Archie Smith has come over to the decent boys — Oh, to be sure, Jim Fitzpatrick is a friend of Rel's, but Fitzpatrick doesn't count."

"You forget Costlow," Lorimer suggested. But at that name May frowned contemptuously.

"That disgusting creature you pointed out on the street, one day, the hoodlum Webb imported from Boston?" she said. "Honestly, Jack, I don't understand how Rel can bear to associate with him at all! If any one had told me three months ago, when the gym was built, that Rel Webb would show such bitterness and stoop to such companionship, just because he failed to get on the basket-ball team, I wouldn't have believed it!"

"Oh, well, let's discuss a pleasanter subject — baseball, say, or the wildcat, or January Jones!"

"Baseball, then."

LADIES' DAY AT THE GYM 5

"All right. Here's a bit of news for you. McGrady and I are going to reverse: he'll pitch and I'll hold him."

"Jack Lorimer!"

"Yes'm, it's no joke," Lorimer affirmed. "I believe Terry will be the better man in the box, and I want him to try it."

May did not contradict — not that her silence gave consent, by any means. But the news was a little stupefying, and when at length she did speak it was only to ask some commonplace question about the rest of the nine.

"Jeff Bussey and Ned Harriott will be the change battery," Lorimer said. "Possibly we'll try my brother Tom and Will Reed, before the season's over. And if your Miss Zaeder happens to develop a battery," he added, with a chuckle, "why, we'll —"

"Just wait till we begin beating you at tennis, and then you won't feel like making impudent remarks!" May interrupted. "Good afternoon, Jack Lorimer!" And with that they parted, May to enter the gymnasium and Captain Jack to turn toward the diamond.

Ladies' Day though it was, there were two male creatures in the gym — both strangers to the readers of the preceding volume of this series, "Captain Jack Lorimer," yet very much at home with the Millvale athletes and their friends.

A fortnight after the gym was opened, a friend

6 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

of Lorimer, an old hunter and woodsman in northern Maine, sent him a "mascot" in the form of a splendid specimen of the Canada lynx or wildcat, "Royal Burr" by name. And a fortnight later still, an "assistant mascot" appeared, in the person of January Jones, age eleven, height four feet seven inches, weight 150 pounds!

Born in Bermondsey, London, one of a large family, so large that there "weren't names enough to go around," January had been sent over here "to be a Hamerican." His mother's cousin, Mr. O'Brien, the janitor of Millvale High, generously offered to take charge of the boy, when his father died; and, what with helping the janitor around the building, the young cockney soon became known to all the fellows and girls, and a warm favourite for his shrewd sense, his unfailing cheerfulness, and many other good qualities.

Of course he was introduced to the gymnasium at once. He promptly appointed himself keeper of the wildcat and assistant to Director Lou Mains. And when it was suggested to the girls that on their Thursdays, Ladies' Day, they needed an attendant who "knew the ropes" and could show them where things were, they unanimously chose the fat boy.

They kept him busy. He needed no help to be happy. But, though he enjoyed their presence, it made the wildcat nervous. With seventy or eighty fellows ranging around the gym, Royal

LADIES' DAY AT THE GYM 7

Burr would sleep peacefully; but now he was restless and inclined to snarl, and he paced his cage uneasily while January talked to quiet him.

"It's hall right, Royal," the fat boy said, soothingly. "They belong to hus, bless their 'earts! You'll get used to 'em, ye know. But Hi'll 'ave to watch hout for you, Royal, hafter the new wears hoff; they'll be bringing you things you didn't hought to heat!"

Then January stopped chattering and straightened up and smiled, as May Roxton approached.

"Tired, January?" she said.

"No, Miss May; no, thank ye, ma'am. Hi'm never tired, when it's you as wants me to do hanythink, ye know!"

"All my wants are supplied," May answered, brightly. "You're a model host. Now that we're getting acquainted, you probably won't have much to do hereafter, except to attend us as guard."

January laughed at that.

"You don't need hany guard, no more than the wildcat 'ere," he answered. "Hour boys were going to fetch you back hearly this hevenink, hand then come at nine o'clock hand take you 'ome, what? Yes, hand you couldn't 'ire one of them to hinterfere between them times. As for the rest of Millvale," January added, "you might hopen hall these doors and windows, hand nobody

8 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

would come a-nigh. 'Cause why? 'Cause they knows hour boys would 'ave their lives!"

Proudly January threw back his head. With a vigorous gesture to emphasize his speech, he turned a little. And there in the doorway — such is the irony of Fate — he saw a young man, a stranger!

"Lem Saunders!" May murmured.

"'Ere, 'ere, this won't do, ye know!" January was already half-way across the floor. He had never seen Rel Webb's former crony, but he had heard about him, and the things he had heard were proof to the fat boy that Saunders was one of the last persons who would be welcome.

"Hexcuse me, sir, but this is Ladies' Day, ye know," January began, politely.

"Ladies' Day, is it?" Lem blew a cloud from his cigarette. He spoke to January, but his eyes were on the girls. Some had gathered around May in an indignant group, but the majority had not yet realized his presence.

"Hi must hask you to leave, sir," January went on, more earnestly. "Gentlemen hare not hadmitted, ye know."

"Oh, I belong to this club," Lem answered. "I'll just wait around till some of the fellows show up. Want to get some points on our new boat-house over at the lake."

"Hi don't believe you belong to this club,"

LADIES' DAY AT THE GYM 9

January growled. "You don't hact like it! Hare you going to leave, what?"

Lem smiled at the angry questioner.

"No hurry," he said.

Boston was now his home. He was in Millvale for only an hour or two, and he could afford to be impudent. The fat boy couldn't put him out, and before Jack Lorimer could be notified, he, Lem, would be far out of reach.

Unluckily for him, Lem had failed to notice that he stood directly in front of what Lou Mains called his rope closet — a little 4 x 6 cubby-hole, lighted from the door, in which he collected all the odd tackle of which a gym gathers so much. January had opened it to get a length of rope with which Nora McGrady thought she could do something original. He had left it open, because it closed with a spring lock, and he didn't want to carry Mains's bunch of keys until Nora got through with the rope. Now it suddenly struck the fat boy that the intruder would just about fit that closet.

Was it worth while to wait for Miss Zaeder to order him out again? It hardly seemed so. Just a second January stood and glared and pulled himself together. Then he lowered his head and made a rush. Fair in the stomach he struck Saunders, and into the closet Saunders went, and in the same instant January slammed the door.

"'Ark at the 'oodlum swear!" he muttered, a

10 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

moment later. "You shut hup!" he cried, with a warning kick at the door; and as he spoke he grasped a slender chain that hung against the wall. "You going to shut hup, what?" he roared.

Again a volley of curses resounded from the closet. January pulled the chain. There was a sound of splashing, a yell, and then a patter as of steady rain, and as the rain continued, the curses ceased.

"Oh, let up!" Lem begged — and January dropped the chain controlling the sprinkler which covered this closet and every other enclosed space in the gym — an arrangement which had been planned for fire protection, but seemed equally useful as a defence against profanity.

"You swear, and Hi'll drown you!" January bellowed. Then he rushed through the gym and the dressing-rooms under the grand stand, and called to the fellows who were tossing a ball on the diamond.

"Come hon, hall of you!" January said. "You want to throw 'im hout 'ard, ye know!"

But Saunders was a very meek and penitent youth, as well as a wet one, when he came out of the closet, and Lorimer merely made a few blistering remarks, slapped his face, and told him to go.

"Say, January," he added, "want one of us to stay around outside — do a kind of patrol, you know — in case anything like this turns up?"

LADIES' DAY AT THE GYM 11

"Ho, no, Mr. Lorimer, thank ye, sir," January answered. "Hi've got the closet, hand ropes, hand Mr. Mains's revolver, hand the wildcat, hand Hi'm not afraid of trouble, ye know!"

And probably that was the reason why no trouble came, and all the girls said later that January had taken care of them like a perfect dear and they had had a lovely time.

"We couldn't have enjoyed ourselves more, if we'd been playing baseball out there in your swamp!" May added, with a mischievous smile.

CHAPTER II

WHEN CHAP STANLEY LOST HIS GAME

BUT, not to dwell on swampy diamonds and other obstacles, when did the Millvale baseball season open, anyway?

In one sense, it might be said to have begun away back in the winter, when Orello A. Webb, "Rel" Webb, and John Adams Lorimer, "Captain Jack," had a falling out that ended in almost all the athletes taking Lorimer's side.

Mainly by his efforts, the Millvale fellows, high school boys and others, "business boys" and students at De Armond's preparatory school, had organized as the Millvale Athletic Club and built a gymnasium. Rel Webb and his father, a sharp and unscrupulous lawyer, had helped; but Rel, a high school senior, resented the leadership of Jack, who was a junior, and when left off the club's basket-ball team — not by any fault of Lorimer — broke out in open rebellion.

In the end Webb was expelled from the athletic club, and, though he remained a member of the Millvale High School Athletic Association, he

WHEN CHAP STANLEY LOST 13

found himself with few friends in it. With the backing of his father's money, however, Rel now believed he could break up the high school baseball team or at least cripple it by dividing public interest and support. It was in pursuit of that design that, on a certain afternoon in April, one Chapman Stanley, a newcomer in Millvale, called on Lou Mains.

Mains had just finished his luncheon, an egg beaten up in a glass of milk, two bananas, and a handful of peanuts. In and out of the gym he had had a busy morning, and he looked forward to a quiet hour before the fellows began to drop in from school. But hardly had he taken his writing-tablet on his knee and hoisted his feet to the desk, when the door of the gym swung open.

"Hello, Lou!" the visitor cried.

"Hello, Stanley," Mains answered. There was not much enthusiasm in his tone. The other fellow smiled cordially as he put out his hand; but, though Mains "shook" in a friendly way, he did not bother to drop his writing materials or ask the stranger to take a seat.

Chapman Stanley was not a very attractive lad. In the neighbourhood of twenty, as Mains himself was, he looked years older, perhaps on account of his sharp, sly, cunning expression. He was taller than Mains, but less solidly built; had a sandy complexion, small, deep-set gray

14 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

eyes, and a long nose. And he was one of the "tonguey" kind, as he at once began to prove.

"Funny we two Maine boys should run together here, ain't it?" he chuckled. "How you makin' it? Much money in the job?"

"All it's worth."

The visitor took one hand out of his pocket, to emphasize his remarks, and leaned forward confidentially.

"Well, say, Lou, I ain't tryin' to nose in, only for your own good," he said. "But I got a notion you may be gettin' all the job's worth — and a good deal less'n you're worth! Say, on the quiet, is it good for more'n twelve a week?"

Mains shook his head.

"There, now! That's about how I sized it up. Twelve dollars a week for a man as good as you — why, say, it's — it's rotten! Why, I can get you a job in Maginty's wholesale grocery, where I am, that'll pay you twenty-five!"

Mains smiled, but was silent.

"It's a cinch!" the visitor went on. "Hour or two a day, in the morning, that's all there is to it. Plenty of time to yourself for baseball or anything. I'm goin' to pitch for the new Millvale club, you know, and you could hold me, see? I cal'late you and me could just about wind up anything that came down the pike!"

"The new Millvale club, eh?" It had been rumoured around town that Rel Webb was going

WHEN CHAP STANLEY LOST 15

to organize a baseball nine. That, of course, was what Stanley was talking about. And Mains listened interestedly, even though he couldn't help scowling, partly with anger and partly from disgust.

The meanest kind of professionalism, to Mains's mind, was that with which, judging by what this fellow had said, Rel Webb meant to bolster up his "amateur" club. As Lou understood the scheme, Chapman Stanley and probably others would be on the pay-rolls of various business houses that were under old Webb's thumb. On the face of it, the fellows would be earning their living like other clerks, and playing ball for amusement. In reality it would be the ball-playing they were paid for, and they would have no more right to class as amateurs than the members of a league team.

But Stanley didn't realize just what Mains's frown meant, and he kept on arguing.

"Don't you run away with the idea that this is a holiday snap that's liable to explode!" he cried. "You can have a six-months' contract — with the grocer, of course, so the thing'll look all straight — and I ain't so sure but what you could squeeze out an extra five dollars on it. It's a cinch, any way you look at it; fun as well as money! You and I could run the team — you know me —"

"Yes," Mains interrupted; but he spoke deliberately. "I know you. You're a cheap crook."

16 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

Stanley reddened and drew back a step.

"Say, Lou!" he protested, "that's kind o' rough, seems to me! I come here offerin' to do you a good turn and help you to square yourself with one o' the solidest men in town — as I understand it, this Mr. Webb, the old man, is down on the gang you're trainin' with, and means to bust 'em — and when he does bust 'em, where'll you be, hey? — and you go to callin' me names!"

The master of the gym looked at his visitor a minute. Stanley's calm assumption that they were old and intimate friends had angered Mains — for the truth was that they had merely faced each other three or four times in opposing teams — and though he would not stoop to discuss Stanley's proposition, that made him angrier still, and he was bound to end the interview right away.

"Scat!" he said. He pointed toward the door.

"Hey?"

"Get, you insect!" Stanley bristled at that, and Mains rose to his feet.

"You're the biggest chump outside the crazy-house!" Stanley sneered. "You ain't got sense enough —"

Biff! Mains's fist landed in Stanley's mouth, and his flow of language abruptly ceased. Back against the wall the visitor reeled, scared as well as hurt.

"Stand up to it!" Mains growled, between



"BACK AGAINST THE WALL THE VISITOR REELED."

WHEN CHAP STANLEY LOST 17

clenched teeth. But Stanley "backed down" instead.

"Say, Lou —"

"Mr. Mains, to you!"

"Say, Mr. Mains, you know what a pitcher's arm is worth to him, with the season just comin' on! I can't fight now, you know! No offence — I didn't mean none — I was tryin' to do you a good turn —"

Mains stamped his foot and pointed toward the door again. What Stanley saw in the other's face must have told him it was time to move.

But he walked backward, being, perhaps, afraid of the kind of attack he himself would have made. He shifted one side, to turn the knob; but when he had opened the door he faced toward the gym again, probably fearing that Mains would be tempted to kick him.

Another backward step — then, somehow, his foot caught the casing. Down he went, head over heels to the walk, landing heavily on his right arm and shoulder.

"Hurt yourself?" Mains asked.

Apparently Stanley had. He swung his arm gently, as he scrambled to his feet; and then he turned on Mains, his face contorted with pain and rage.

"If I have, you bet you and your gang will hear from it!" he hissed.

Mains smiled, and shut the door.

CHAPTER III

THE TWO VISITORS FROM WINTERTON

It was that same evening, while Mains was telling three or four of the fellows about his collision with Rel Webb's pitcher, that Captain Jack was summoned to the telephone. Ted Leighton, the leader of the high school athletes in Doverdale, a small city adjoining Millvale at the east, was calling.

"Got an idea, Jack," Ted began. "Why not organize a suburban league of four high school baseball clubs, each to play three games with each of the others, eighteen games in all? That'll give us something definite to play for, and make things more interesting all around."

"What clubs?"

"Millvale, Roxbridge, Derry, and Doverdale."

"Not Winterton?"

"Not much! Winterton's the next place to us, and it's only twelve miles from you, but for reasons I don't need to explain, we'd rather say Derry instead."

"Well, Walton, the Derry captain is a first-

rate fellow and his high school always has a good team, but the trouble is that Derry's a hard place to get to and from. Might fix that, I suppose, by giving her games on Saturdays, but — ”

“ Yes, why not? ” Ted interrupted. “ Until school closes, we won't want to be tied to a schedule for more than one game a week, and we ought to have some Saturdays clear. But we might easily get in half the games between this and July, and then we could finish at our leisure. ”

“ Would you want that game we agreed to play Saturday to count on a schedule? ”

“ I'm willing. What say if I try to get Marr and Walton on the 'phone to-night and ask them to meet me at your gym to-morrow afternoon and talk over the scheme? ”

“ Go ahead. Of course, I can't promise anything until I've seen our fellows, but we'd be glad to have you drop around anyhow. ”

Then Captain Jack started to get opinions, soon discovering that everybody seemed to favour the Doverdale captain's idea.

“ Good card to play against Rel Webb, ” Mains suggested. “ He'll have nothing but odd games with picked-up nines — you'll be in a league, playing for a championship — something for people to fix their minds on — every game advertising the next one. ”

That was about the way the others saw it. So when Leighton of Doverdale, Marr of Rox-

20 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

bridge, and Walton of Derry appeared next afternoon, all enthusiastic for the new plan, there was little for Captain Jack to do but support it.

"No reason why Derry and Roxbridge shouldn't get together Saturday, same time you fellows do!" Rob Marr declared. "This is only Wednesday—that gives us heaps of time. We'll visit you, Walton, if you say so, and we'll begin now to whoop her up so that we'll have all Roxbridge at the first game on our home grounds!

"Hey, there, Royal Burr!" he cried, "three screams and a long yell for the suburban league!" But the wildcat had stretched out luxuriously in a ray of sunlight and gone to sleep, and the bipeds had to furnish all the applause.

"I move that Walton make out a schedule," said Captain Jack, a little later. "Derry's the smallest place," he explained. "Probably he doesn't get the backing our teams do, so it'll be up to us to make things easy for him, let him pick his own dates, for instance." And to that generous suggestion nobody objected but Walton himself. His honest eyes expressed something besides pleasure as he gazed from one to another.

"You're white about it, fellows," he said, "but I don't know whether I ought to hamper you by going into this thing at all. Derry's an out-of-the-way place, even though it's not many miles off, and you'd save yourselves trouble by taking a

fourth town — say, Winterton — that's on a direct route."

Ted Leighton lifted his hand and started to speak. But before he could do so he was stopped in his turn by Captain Jack.

"Here's one of the Winterton boys now — one of the best of the lot," he said, in an undertone. "Hello, Parkhurst," he called out, "glad to see you! Come over here and meet some friends of mine."

As he introduced Marr and Walton, who were strangers to Parkhurst, the tall, clean-cut, energetic lad from Winterton seemed to surmise the purpose of their gathering.

"Talking baseball?" he asked. "I was sent over to see what was the prospect for some games."

"Who's your captain, this season?" Lorimer asked. "Is it Jake Stein again?"

"Well — perhaps."

"Mott and Fairfield and Bellows on the nine?" Captain Jack was naming three who, with Stein, had shown themselves grossly dishonest and unfair in football and basket-ball games of the previous winter.

"Mott has come out for it," Parkhurst answered.

"No go, then," Lorimer said, promptly. "If Winterton would put up a nine composed of fellows like yourself and Jerry Sullivan, we'd meet you

22 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

any time. But we'll have nothing to do with Stein and such curs as I mentioned!"

Parkhurst looked away and drummed on his chair a minute as if considering. Finally, he seemed to take a resolution to be frank.

"I don't want to run down my own classmates," he burst out. "But, between ourselves, the nine isn't quite settled on yet, and there's a movement to — well, to kind of clean up!"

"Good enough! Throw out your hoodlums, and we'll be with you."

"Doverdale, too!" Ted Leighton added.

The visitor nodded to show that he understood.

"What's this about Rel Webb's nine?" he inquired, abruptly.

"I understand he plans to run one," Lorimer answered. "Probably you know as much about it as we do."

"I may know something later," Parkhurst smiled, significantly. "Stein came over here to-day to see Webb and find out about it."

"Birds of a feather!" chuckled Ted Leighton. But nobody said much about Stein and his crowd, for it was evident that this was a sore subject with Parkhurst and the decent fellows of Winter-ton; and what Captain Jack strove to do was to cheer him and brace him for a fight in which Lorimer hoped that Parkhurst would win.

Meantime, while the new suburban league was thus getting under way — and the four captains

agreed that, if the Parkhurst faction won, Winterton should come into it — Stein had hunted up Rel Webb.

“Just the fellow I was looking for, Jake!” was Rel’s greeting. “Should have gone after you, if you hadn’t turned up. Got a good nine this year?”

“I guess so,” Stein answered. “There’s a little kick-up against me and my bunch, — we’ve got some saints in Winterton High that want to do things Jack Lorimer’s way, — but it looks as if I’ll come out on top. Saturday’ll settle it. If I get beaten, I’ll have a nine, just the same, and, if I don’t get licked too bad, I’ll call it the high school team, anyway!”

“Good boy!” applauded Webb. “Come over here Saturday week and play with us. Say, have you seen our grounds? — that big lot of father’s out Main Street extension, you know. Best diamond in Massachusetts! There’s where you’ll find the crowd, too!”

“But, say!” he added, “what about a game Saturday week? The Lorimer gang will probably have one, and I want to put on a game every time they do.”

Stein looked uncomfortable. He was not quite ready for such a proposition, but he hardly knew how to decline it.

“Well, I tell you, Rel,” he said. “I hate Lorimer — I’d like to make a date with you, this

24 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

minute — but we're only instructed to try for games with Millvale High and Doverdale — Parkhurst is attending to it to-day — and if I say I'll play with you Saturday week it'll have to be kept quiet until after I find out whether I control the nine or not. Understand?"

"Yes, I understand," Rel answered, angrily. "You think it would spoil your chances to have it known that you're chumming with an outlaw like me!"

"It would be taking a risk," was Stein's dogged reply. "The school authorities are friendly to Lorimer, and so are some of the fellows, and I can't afford just now to seem to be fighting him. I'll meet you Saturday week, either with the school nine or another one, but it mustn't be publicly known until after this coming Saturday."

"All right. Leave it that way. You'll find Lorimer won't play you, any more than he'd pet a skunk!" Rel added, maliciously.

Stein wanted to resent that, but he decided it wouldn't pay. Rel had money. He depended on Rel to bolster him in many ways. So he said nothing, and after awhile started Rel on a safer topic, boasting of what he was going to do.

"The real sports will be with us," Rel said, "the fellows who know baseball and are ready to back their opinions. If you've got anybody in Winterton who likes to bet on innings or games, tell him

to come over and he'll find somebody here to accommodate him!"

Stein grinned behind Webb's back. This promised a chance to do business. He did know a good many of that kind of "sports," and he had a pleasant vision of their skinning the green gamblers of Millvale down to their bones.

CHAPTER IV

ACCIDENTS THAT CRIPPLED MILLVALE

THAT Wednesday when the suburban league was organized, with everybody deferring to Captain Jack and accepting his views, it looked as if the Millvale season had taken a "flying start" — flying just the way he wished. But on Thursday and Friday he received two or three reminders that all the world wasn't friendly, and on Saturday morning his younger brother Tom introduced him to trouble before they left the breakfast-table.

"Growing fast, Millvale is," was the innocent way Tom began. "I've heard of three fellows besides Chap Stanley, who have come here, got work in Maginty's grocery and other places, and just for fun, you know, have agreed to play with Rel Webb's nine. Isn't it kind of 'em — hard-working men like they are — to go in for baseball in their spare time, just to help Rel get up a first-class amateur team?"

Jack laughed. Rel's pretence of amateurism was very transparent, and yet not very easy to understand. Since Rel was going to pay his

players, why not make it a straight business venture and by charging an admission fee try to get back some of his money?

However, it was "his own funeral," and none of the high school boys — except Fitzpatrick — would be among the mourners. Jack kept on at his breakfast, with no worse appetite because of the news. But presently Tom started a less agreeable subject.

"People have heard about your putting Terry McGrady in the box and going behind the bat yourself, and everybody says you're a chump," he suggested.

"What everybody says must be true," Jack answered, good-naturedly.

"Well, Terry'll have to show 'em," grumbled Tom. "If you were pitching we know we'd lick Doverdale, but everybody says Doverdale's heavy batters like Merchant and Spike and Howe will just eat Terry up!"

Captain Jack said nothing.

"Say, Jack, why can't Reed and I try 'em?" Tom went on in a wheedling tone. "Those fellows can't bat my inshoot or my drop. I know! I've studied 'em!"

"I'm going to save you, Tom, for the first game with Derry," Jack answered. "That'll give you plenty of time to get up steam. Besides, you haven't the strength or staying power of fellows two or three years older, and the less you use

28 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

your arm in this uncertain April weather, the more you'll be able to use it later, probably."

But this was greeted with a growl of discontent; and at that —

"See here, young man!" Captain Jack said, suddenly. "You've been talking about criticism: do you understand that I'm catching a good deal of it on your account?"

"Who, me?"

"Yes, you — and me! Some folks say, you know, that you wouldn't be in the high school nine if your name wasn't Lorimer. See the point? That's why I want to break you in gradually and be sure that, when I do bring you forward, you'll be able to make good."

Tom was silent for as much as a minute.

"All right," he said, at length, in a subdued voice. "Who'll you put in," he added, "if Terry gets knocked out?"

"Terry isn't going to be knocked out," Jack answered. "But if anything happened, it would be Jeff and Ned next."

"Bussey and Harriott, eh? Well, that's better than McGrady and Lorimer — but not as good as Lorimer and McGrady!"

Jack threatened to throw a plate, and Tom dodged and ran out of the room — both of them laughing. But though the elder brother took it pleasantly and pretended to slight the doleful

prophecies of the younger, the talk left him feeling a little blue. Was it possible that he had made a mistake in sizing up Terry? If so, he, Lorimer, was no man to captain the nine.

Well, a little time would tell whether his chum had that control of the ball, that self-command, that strength, and that endurance which go to make a successful pitcher. Meantime he would not permit himself to doubt. Terry was going to win that game!

For all the winners there would be much glory. It seemed at noon as if half of Doverdale was in town already. There were large delegations arriving from Roxbridge and Derry. Winterton was numerously represented, both by the clean, straight fellows like Parkhurst and Sullivan, and the hoodlums and vagabonds that trailed after Stein's gang, — these latter keeping Jim Spinney, the club's special officer, very busy.

"Ought to have the grounds fenced," Spinney growled to Jeff Bussey, as he paused a minute to take breath. "Fence 'em and put me at the gate and I'll guarantee that Winterton trash'll stay out in the gutter where it belongs!"

"Tell that to old Seth Lanard and he'll start on a sixteen-foot fence Monday mornin' before breakfast," Jeff chuckled.

"By George, I will!"

"Say, hold on, Jim!" Jeff cried, in a panic-stricken tone. Suppose the policeman should go

30 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

to the generous backer of the Millvale athletes and involve him in needless expense!

"That was a joke, understand?" Jeff went on. "Why, just think of what Mr. Lanard has done for us! He's leased us all this land for a cent a year, or somethin' like; he chipped in a lot of money toward building and fitting the gym, and just lately he's built a boat-house for us and a tennis-court for the girls. Of course he's one of the richest men in town, but he's spent so much that we've voted not to take anything more from him, and I'd get into the worst kind of a mess if the boys knew I said anything like I did. You want to forget it, quick!"

Jim Spinney smiled and nodded.

"I don't s'pose Mr. Lanard's likely to forget that Jack Lorimer saved his little granddaughter from being run over by a trolley-car," he said. "Lorimer's friends will always be friends of his, I reckon.

"Guess you've got some besides him, too," he added, glancing over the grand stand and grounds. "This is about the biggest crowd I ever saw at any kind of an outdoor show in Millvale."

And the crowd kept growing. It was almost up to the base lines when the game opened, with Millvale at the bat.

This was the batting order that Umpire Lou Mains held when he gave the word, "Play!"

MILLVALE

Bell, 1b.
 White, 3b.
 McGrady, p.
 Harriott, r. f.
 Ford, c. f.
 Janvrin, 2b.
 Lorimer, c.
 Kavanagh, s. s.
 Chapin, l. f.

DOVERDALE

Feeney, r. f.
 Howe, 3b.
 Spike, 2b.
 Perks, s. s.
 Moran, l. f.
 Upham, 1b.
 Merchant, c.
 Phillips, c. f.
 Leighton, p.

Tom Bell and Ted Leighton faced each other smilingly, for they were warm friends; but as Ted wound up to deliver the ball the smiles faded and a keen, intent look came into their eyes. Both meant business now.

The first ball went wide, and was not very deceptive. For an instant Tom's smile came back and he shook his head at the man in the box. But Ted's second try seemed promising. Tom swung at it, caught it near the end of the bat, and placed it safe between second and third.

Horace White, the next in order, and a stranger to Leighton, was a left-handed batter, and for an experiment Ted sent him a waist-high over the inside corner. Horace struck at it, but all it was good for was a foul fly, which was promptly taken.

Two strikes were called on Terry McGrady before he got the one he wanted and planted it in short right field. Tom Bell moved round to third as the result of slow handling of the ball, McGrady

32 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

losing a fine chance to make second as the ball was thrown to Howe.

Ned Harriott was disposed of on strikes, without taking his bat from his shoulder. Ford, who followed, was less dependable, but he connected with the sphere for a single and Tom Bell came home with the first run of the game. Then Janvrin hit a sharp liner into Perks's hands for the third out, with one run to Millvale's credit.

"Lorimer! Lorimer!" a few enthusiasts began to yell as Millvale went into the field. Something like a growl of disapproval rose from the crowd as Jack and Terry were seen to reverse their customary positions.

"Three cheers for McGrady, the new pitcher!" some friend of Terry's cried at just the right moment. That was a signal for those who were closest to the club and thick-and-thin supporters of its tactics. Old Seth Lanard himself, Lorimer's best admirer, swung his hat and led the wave of applause for Terry.

Yet Terry didn't look happy. He knew what he could do behind the bat, but between the points — well, there he only knew what Jack thought he could do.

He made a good beginning, though, by striking out Feeney, who was not used to being struck out, and stared at Mains, when he got the word, as if he had heard some strange language.

Howe popped up an easy fly, which Ford over-

ran, and Spike sent him to second by a clean hit to centre. Howe tried to steal third, but was cleverly thrown out by Jack.

The third put-out might have come right here, with quick work, for as Howe started for third Spike legged it to second, but Horace White held the ball an instant too long, and when Janvrin finally got it Spike was safe.

"Look out for him!" Jack signalled Terry. Spike was easily Doverdale's star base-runner, and if Perks gave him any help he would find his way home.

"Ball — one strike — strike two — two balls," called Mains, monotonously. Then Perks found what he was looking for, and hit a scorcher past third for two bases, sending Spike home with the tying run.

Moran was by no means Doverdale's best batter, but he seemed to feel sure of his luck and smiled confidently as he waited to see what Terry would do for him. It was a rising curve that Terry gave him, and Moran got in a scratch single, moving Perks up to third. It was Upham's ambition to bring him home, and gallantly he tried. Once he swung and missed, the second time he landed for a single and one run came in, giving Doverdale the lead.

Terry set his teeth. Merchant, who faced him now, was one of Doverdale's heaviest hitters, and if he got in a long drive it meant two more runs.

34 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

Moran's blunder saved Millvale. Perhaps he thought that Terry wasn't attending to business. At any rate Moran tried to steal third, and was promptly nailed, McGrady to White. That closed the inning, with Doverdale two to Millvale one.

It was Captain Jack's turn at the bat. Terry found a chance to say a word as he passed the players' bench.

"You see I'm a fizzle!" Terry muttered, "Five safe hits off me in this inning!"

"Oh, well, what does that amount to? The game's just begun. You haven't got your hand in yet."

"Sure, I put my foot in it, anyhow, when I consented to go into the box. 'Tis no place for the likes of me. Let's switch!"

"Nonsense, Terry! Brace up!" and Captain Jack slapped him on the shoulder as he went to the plate.

But when that half was over he felt as though he needed a bit of a brace himself, for Ted Leighton had struck out him and Kavanagh and Chapin, one after another.

Terry's trouble was yet to come. Merchant's time at the bat was not completed — had not really begun, in fact — when the first inning ended. Now he confidently returned to the plate — and Terry gave him an easy one.

Merchant went for it. But a foul was the out-

come, Tom Bell gathered it in, and Merchant's smile changed to a scowl as he gave way to Phillips.

Doverdale's centre fielder struck out, and Ted Leighton took his turn. Captain Jack had a pretty clear idea of where Captain Ted would try to place a hit, and he drew his outfielders a little closer and moved Janvrin nearer third.

Leighton went out on a long fly to Chapin. That closed the second even inning, with no gain for anybody — and Terry seemed to be feeling a little better.

"Line her out, Tom!" somebody cried as Bell went to the bat, and Tom responded with a drive over Moran's head for three bases. White was passed to first. Terry hit a grounder to Leighton and Bell was caught at the plate. Harriott and Ford fanned out, and Doverdale had pulled out of a very small hole.

And now, with Doverdale at bat again, it was Feeney's policy to be cautious. No second strike-out should be charged to him, if he knew it! So he waited, and finally he got his base on balls. Little good it did him, though, for he was thrown out at second.

The best hit of the day, so far, was Howe's daisy-cutter into left field, for three bases, good for a run on Spike's single; but Spike, a fellow who took desperate chances and generally with success, was caught between first and second and

36 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

run out. Then, though Perks hit safely, Moran, with two men out, sent up a high one, which Janvrin captured.

For Millvale, Janvrin flew out to Perks, Lorimer cut one safe to right, Kavanagh drew a pass, and Chapin sent a long fly to right, on which Captain Jack slipped over to third, only to see Tom Bell go out at first, on a sharp grounder well handled by Leighton.

In her half Doverdale got another run, thanks to Merchant's home run drive. But Upham struck out and Phillips died at first, and when Ted Leighton came to bat, Terry was bound to make him the third man out. He signalled to Jack a jump ball close to the shoulder that seldom yields anything better than a foul.

Ted hit it, though. Crack! it went out, a hot liner, straight for Terry. Crack! again as it struck Terry's knee. He stopped it and fielded it to first, and Leighton was out. But once that was assured, Terry collapsed.

"Sorry, boys," he said, speaking with difficulty through whitened lips. "I guess I'm done for this game."

But though Captain Jack, fearing that the injury meant a broken knee-cap, ordered his friend home, Terry wouldn't hear of it. He hobbled into the gym, rubbed his leg and tied it up, and crawled back to the players' bench.

Ned Harriott scored with two out, on a two-

bagger, a stolen base, and a pass ball in the Millvale half. Then Bussey and Harriott had gone in as the new battery, Captain Jack moving down to right field. And in this Doverdale half of the fifth, Millvale gave a close imitation of the first inning, even to the number of runs admitted.

Feeney and Perks scored on clean hits helped out by a double steal and a missed grounder at short. When Jeff got over to the bench —

“By gravy!” he said, “them two fellers won’t get any more hits off’m me.”

The sixth inning, from its start almost to its end, can be described in few words. It was a pitchers’ battle, and only one man in either nine got beyond second.

With two men out for Doverdale, Spike went to the bat, and Jeff gave him a slow drop. Spike found it. Singing through the air it went, a hot one, straight from the plate and over the box. It was travelling high and moving like a bullet. But Jeff wasn’t going to let it pass, if he could help it.

Up in the air he leaped, for half his height, it seemed. That big paw of his shot up at just the right time, in just the right place, and the ball went into it and stayed. The side was out.

Then Jeff ambled over to the players’ bench and showed the second finger of his right hand. It was split from end to end.

38 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

“Say, Terry,” he cried, “it’s a good thing there’s a number of us to divide these little love-taps, eh? If one man had your knee and my finger, both of ’em, I cal’late he’d feel as if he wanted to go and lie down!”

CHAPTER V

AND NOBODY WINS IN THE NINTH

THE fellows at the Millvale players' bench looked from Jeff to Terry, and then at Captain Jack.

"Sure it's no use, Jack," said Terry. "You'll have to go into the box."

"That's about the size of it," Jeff agreed.

Lorimer glanced around at the pony battery, his brother Tom and Will Reed, and thought a minute. There was more than one reason why he did not want to pitch the remainder of the game. For one thing, it might provoke comparisons which he was anxious to avoid.

Yet, if he put in the younger fellows, the batting order would be knocked askew, and some older player would have to be displaced; and with the score six to two in Doverdale's favour at the beginning of the seventh inning, it was hardly wise to sacrifice any man who was capable of effective stick work.

"All right," he said, at length. "I'll try it — Ned Harriott and I. Ben," he added to Cashman,

40 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

"will you look after right field? On the batting list you come between White and Harriott."

Meantime Harriott had fanned out, Ford had hit safely and was playing off first, and Matt Janvrin was at the bat, with one strike called. As they looked toward the diamond again, Matt found the ball and laced it into left field for a two-bagger.

Was Ted Leighton letting down the bars, or was Millvale bracing? The friends of the home nine hoped that both these things were true, and waited eagerly on Captain Jack as he went over to the plate.

It was easy enough to see where he should place the ball this time — if he found it. And he did, and lined it out between first and second.

Two men raced for it, and it was fielded with beautiful speed and certainty. It was Ford they were after, Ford, who was hustling home from third, and the great slide Ford made at the last, and Merchant's touch with the ball, looked like events of the same instant.

"Out!" said Mains.

Some of the Millvale enthusiasts started to hiss, but that didn't last long, and Captain Jack was glad it didn't. The loss of the run was as keen a disappointment to him as to anybody. But he knew Mains was square, self-possessed, and right on the pot, and if Mains said out, out it was.

There was still a chance, anyway. Janvrin

was at third, and Jack trusted Phil Kavanagh to bring him home.

Once and twice Leighton cut the corners of the plate, and Phil grinned and waited. The third ball came low and went wide, but that was what Phil wanted. He caught it on the end of his bat and sent it skipping along the right foul line.

It looked to be good for three bases, but it was well handled and Phil stopped at second. Janvrin scored. And now, with Lorimer on third and Kavanagh on second, and old reliable Will Chapin at the bat, Millvale hopes rose high and Ted Leighton looked serious.

Talk about caution! Will simply waited. Ted tempted him with all kinds, but he let them go by, and with two strikes on him he finally got his base on balls and Tom Bell came to the plate.

Tom took the first ball and placed it at centre, where the outfielder had to sprint for it. The three on bases sprinted, too. Lorimer came in and so did Kavanagh, though Phil got through by the skin of his teeth.

Ted Leighton braced then and struck out White, the third man. But Millvale had brought in three runs in this inning, and was now within one of her rival.

Luck stayed with Millvale, as Captain Jack modestly put it, in the second half, for he struck out Perks, Moran, and Upham in one-two-three order.

42 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

Nor did Ted Leighton's brace fail him in the first half of the eighth. Cashman fanned out, Harriott popped an easy fly to Spike, and Ford displaced the atmosphere instead of the ball.

As for Doverdale, Merchant was sure he was going to get something. But all he succeeded in turning out was a grounder, which Kavanagh took care of, and, though Phillips bunted and then stole second, he ended there when Leighton and Feeney successively struck out.

"Here's where we got to get 'em — two of 'em!" Jeff Bussey remarked, as Janvrin went up to the plate to open the ninth. Matt knew it, too. Cool as an iceberg, he let Leighton's first two balls go by. The third he bunted. That was not Janvrin's usual way — they expected the ball in the outfield — and because nobody was prepared for it he beat the ball to first.

"Hit her out, Jack!" roared old Seth Lanard, as Lorimer followed Matt. Not much need of saying that! Jack meant to do it if he could. Leighton thought he couldn't.

"Play off, play off! get a lead," Horace White on the coachers' line was calling to Matt Janvrin. "He can't get you — it's Lorimer he's laying for! Back to your bag! Now you come again! Ready! Merchant's going to drop it! Ready! Go! Slide! Hold it!"

Merchant threw short, and Matt was safe on second. But before he had fairly realized where

he was, Jack got his eye on the ball and drove out a hot liner.

"Up you come, Janvrin!" yelled Ben Cashman on the other coachers' line. "It's too hot for him—he can't stop it! Up you come! Sprint, now? Slide!"

That liner of Lorimer's had gone through Perks, small blame to him, and while he was trying to recover and field it, Janvrin made third and Jack risked second and just got there.

Kavanagh went to the plate scowling ferociously, the responsibility he felt sticking out all over him. But he placed a single to centre, and Janvrin came home on it. That tied the score, and the friends of Millvale opened their lungs in jubilation.

But now a disappointment must have been due, for Will Chapin, whom everybody would have bet on, went out on a foul fly. Tom Bell, who followed him, struck out, to his own great disgust, and White sent the ball straight into Upham's hands.

With the score six to six, old Seth Lanard's face was fairly haggard with the strain of the situation.

"Think Jack can hold 'em till Millvale gets another chance at the ball?" he said to May Roxton. "What? Think he can hold 'em?"

"Of course he can!" May answered, confidently.

44 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

But Jack was not so sure of that.

Howe, the first man up, was a heavy hitter, though not a sure one. Spike and Perks, who would come next, were brainy batters, and Spike was a very demon at getting around the bases. Moran was rather an uncertain quantity, but then came Upham, a safe man with the stick, and Merchant, who was Doverdale's star.

Well, all Jack could do was his best. He wound up for an inshoot that had fooled Howe before. This time Howe didn't try it. But he did crack at the next; and Janvrin got the ball and put it in to first with a joyous grin on his face.

Spike struck out, so that danger was disposed of; but the sourest fellow in Massachusetts was that same Spike. He couldn't quite understand it, either.

"By Jove, I wish I could try that over again!" he muttered, as he walked toward the bench. "Say, look out for that drop of his!" he added to Perks. "The only way you can meet it fair is to step in and get it before it breaks."

Perks went after an out-curve that looked almost good enough to eat. But that ball was meant to be batted, and Lorimer knew pretty well where Perks's style of swing would send it. The ball got there, according to schedule, and Kavanagh pulled it in.

But there was not much applause. People seemed to have an idea that if they made a noise

it would use up valuable time, somehow. And with the score six to six, they just held their breath and longed to know what would happen in the tenth inning.

Six to six! Both teams on edge with determination to win, and every spectator keyed to the highest notch.

Millvale people shook their heads when they saw that Ben Cashman, old Seth Lanard's nephew, led the batting list. They didn't know much about Ben, but they didn't like his "superior" way; and they remembered that he fanned when he went to bat before.

Ben's uncle felt rather uneasy, too.

"If he strikes out this time, I'll take him out in the barn, gosh blame him, and take a harness strap to him!" Seth Lanard muttered to May.

But in the next minute the old man was on his feet roaring encouragement that could be heard an eighth of a mile. For Ben had not struck out, but had hit safely.

Harriott, however, failed, as Ben had been expected to do. Ford dropped a Texas Leaguer over short, Janvrin went out on a hard line drive to Moran. Two down and one chance left.

Now it was Captain Jack at the bat. He felt determined and hopeful, and Millvale howled joyously, thinking the game as good as won.

"Bring 'em in, Jack!" yelled old Seth Lanard.

Ted Leighton heard that, and it touched his

46 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

"funny bone." He laughed, took a better grip on the leather, and shot the ball with full force over the outside of the plate. With his bat well in front, and held six inches from the bottom, Captain Jack timed the ball to a fraction; met it plumb on the centre, to see it slip safe between right and centre, to the music of the Millvale rooters, as Cashman crossed the home plate.

Kavanagh was third man out. The Doverdales went out in order, Moran and Upham striking out and Merchant sent a sharp liner that Tom Bell pulled in with one hand, and Millvale had won.

OFFICIAL SCORE

MILLVALE						DOVERDALE					
	A.	B.	H.	O.	A.	R.		A.	B.	H.	O.
Bell, 1b.	5	3	11	0	0		Feeney, r.f.	3	1	1	0
White, 3b.	3	0	2	1	1		Howe, 3b.	4	3	0	0
McGrady, p.	2	1	0	1	0		Spike, 2b.	5	2	2	4
Bussey, p.	1	0	0	2	0		Perks, s.s.	5	2	3	1
Cashman, r.f. . .	2	1	0	0	0		Moran, 1f.	4	1	2	0
Harriott, r.f., c. .	6	1	1	1	0		Upham, 1b.	4	1	6	0
Ford, c.f.	6	3	2	2	0		Merchant, c. . .	4	1	16	1
Janvrin, 2b.	5	2	2	2	0		Phillips, c.f. . .	4	1	0	0
Lorimer, c., r.f., p.	6	3	9	3	0		Leighton, p. . .	4	0	0	3
Kavanagh, s.s. . .	4	2	2	2	1						
Chapin, 1f.	5	0	1	1	0						
Totals	45	16	30	15	2		Totals	37	12	30	9

Millvale 1 0 0 0 1 0 3 0 1 1—7
Doverdale 2 0 1 1 2 0 0 0 0 0—6

Runs scored — By Bell, Cashman, Harriott, Janvrin (2), Lorimer, Kavanagh, Feeney, Howe (2), Spike, Perks, Merchant. Two-base hits — Bell, Harriott, Janvrin, Kavanagh, Perks. Three-base hits — Howe, Bell. Home runs — Merchant. Stolen bases — Harriott, Phillips, Feeney, Howe. First base on balls — By McGrady 1, Lorimer 2, Leighton 3. Struck out — By McGrady 2, Bussey 1, Lorimer 6, Leighton 12. Double plays — Perks, Spike, and Upham. Passed balls — Merchant. Wild pitches — Leighton. Time — 1.55. Umpire — Lou Mains. Attendance (estimated) — 1,800. Official scorer — T. H. Murnane.

"Better luck for you next time, Ted!" Captain Jack said as Leighton stepped forward to shake hands with him.

"Come on, cripples!" he called to Terry and Jeff, as he went over to the players' bench. "Time to get you into the gym — there's our doctor, up in the stand — and have you fixed up before we send you home."

"Oh, take your shower-bath first," Terry answered. "Sure I'm never in a hurry to meet a doctor."

But Jack had his way about it. To the gym they went.

Mains had preceded them. But he had not gone very far. Just inside the door he stood, whistling softly through his teeth, and as they stepped in he looked at them and waved his hand around. There was no need to tell them what that meant. The scene spoke for itself.

Somebody had broken into the place and turned it topsyturvy. Ropes were cut, apparatus had been pulled down or ripped up, rubbish from the closets was strewn in every conspicuous spot. A can of benzine had been emptied over one heap. It looked as though the vandals had started to set fire to it, and then for some reason had changed their minds and put it out.

Mains's desk was in the worst mess. Somebody had forced the top and emptied in a pot of green

48 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

paint — thoroughly, too, for none of the drawers had missed its share.

"Looks like my friend Chap Stanley," Mains said in Lorimer's ear. "Same kind of trick he was accused of in Lewiston once."

Jeff Bussey had not overheard, but he had a theory of his own. "Cal'late it was some of them toughs from Winterton," he growled.

"'Tis a great pity the wildcat didn't get loose!" said Terry, grimly.

"There'll be one loose with his claws out when Uncle Seth hears about this," Ben Cashman suggested.

"Oh, we'll find out who did it, whether it's Millvale or Winterton work," Captain Jack said, confidently. "Meantime we'll have a chance to show how smart we are at making repairs.

"That the telephone bell?" he added. "Well, I'll answer.

"Hello — Yes, this is Lorimer — Marr speaking? — All right — Roxbridge beat Derry, sixteen to thirteen? — Congratulations — Millvale seven, Doverdale six, ten innings — All right, meet you next Saturday — Good-bye.

"Marr says the Derry man has made out our league schedule, and it places us at Roxbridge for a game next Saturday," he explained, as he rejoined the group.

"Hello, Parkhurst!" he called, as he glanced toward the door. "Come in. Breaking up house-

keeping, you see." Briefly, and without stating all their suspicions, he explained the confusion, and the Winterton fellow sympathized warmly.

"Thought you'd like to know," he said, "that we had the baseball meeting this morning, and beat Stein by just two votes."

"Good enough!" But Parkhurst smiled rather sadly, and shook his head.

"No, not quite," he said. "Stein's going to claim — does claim — that it wasn't a fair vote. He'll go ahead and organize. There'll be two Winterton High School nines, until the other fellows get sick of it, or unless we can induce the authorities to act. I understand that Stein's crowd has already agreed to play Rel Webb's gang here in Millvale next Saturday.

"As for us — well, we did the best we could," Parkhurst added. "Going to let us into that suburban league of yours?"

"Sure!" was Lorimer's hearty answer. "We'll have Walton, the schedule man, fix up a new list, with you in it, right away. And here's hoping that Millvale comes out at the head of the five clubs and Winterton — doesn't end at the foot!"

CHAPTER VI

LOU MAINS RETURNS A CALL

It was just about as Ben Cashman had predicted. "A wildcat with his claws out" — that was old Seth Lanard, the athletes' backer, when he heard of the damage done to the gym — and he came to the athletic club's business meeting, on Monday night, all ready to attack their unknown enemy.

"Offer a reward?" he repeated, when some one spoke of tracing the author of the outrage. "Gosh blame it, of course ye will! If it hadn't been for the looks o' the thing — givin' some fool a chance to say that I was runnin' ye — I'd 'a' put a notice in this morning's paper. You vote a hundred dollars to anybody that'll catch the rascal that upshot this gym, and if the money's called for, I'll pay it, by gum!"

He glanced around the group. His eyes rested on the fat boy. Fat? January Jones seemed to have grown thin in the two days since the gym had been raided. He had grown old, too, from grief and regret, and, mainly to cheer him, Mr. Lanard spoke.

"Say, January, why don't you earn that hundred?" he cried. "I'll back ye to spot the gosh-blamed pirate if ye set out to do it!"

January didn't smile.

"Ho, yus, Hi'm a-goin' to catch 'im, thank ye, sir," he answered, gloomily. "That's my business, ye know — for because I didn't hought to 'ave gone away from 'ere last Saturday, ye know."

"Don't talk nonsense, Chub!" Captain Jack put in. "When Mr. O'Brien asked you to go to Boston for him, Saturday, that was your business. If you'd stayed in Millvale, you'd have been out on the field, yelling for the nine, so this mix-up would have happened just the same. Nobody's to blame for it except the scoundrel that did it — and we'll catch him!"

"Hi'll catch 'im!" January repeated, stubbornly — and Mr. Lanard chuckled.

"I cal'late you're jest as liable to as anybody is," he said. "Policemen don't know any more'n they see, or are told, and you're startin' with as much information as they've got. Where ye goin' to look first, hey? To that Winterton gang Jeff Bussey tells about, the crowd that our policeman drove off the grounds?"

"No, sir, thank ye, sir."

"Parkhurst and Sullivan, our friends in Winterton, will keep track of them," Lorimer suggested. But Mr. Lanard seemed to think this was a matter of small importance, anyway.

52 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

"Oh, that job was Millvale hatchin'!" he said, fiercely. "Looks 'bout as thick, just now, as the fog outdoors, but when it clears up we'll find a gosh-blamed Webb behind it, I bate ye!

"You goin' to chase up that crooked ball player that Mains turned out of here t'other day?" he asked again. "Think he's the one that did it?"

The fat boy shook his head. Mr. Lanard stared at him a minute.

"Look here, January, you come over here in the corner; I want to talk to ye," he exclaimed at length, and the boy and the old man went away by themselves and whispered mysteriously for some minutes. Evidently Mr. Lanard felt some faith in January's theory, whatever it was.

"You go right ahead," they heard the old man say, as the conference ended. "If money'll help ye, you come and git it; and if you nail the galoot, that hundred's yourn!"

"Hi don't want hany money, blow me!" was January's emphatic rejoinder.

But a reward might make a good deal of difference with some people, so the club promptly carried out Mr. Lanard's suggestion, and voted one hundred dollars for information leading to the detection and conviction of the person or persons who had entered the gym and damaged property. Thanks to Mains's energetic work, much of the apparatus had already been restored

to usable shape. But considerable was beyond redemption, and all the fellows felt that they would be willing to sacrifice something if the vandal could be given a sharp lesson.

It wasn't a pleasant subject to think about, anyhow. The crowd was about as gloomy, this Monday evening, as the weather. So after the reward had been voted Captain Jack adjourned the business meeting and started to fix the minds of his friends on more agreeable things.

"Got the club's baseball team all picked, Hans?" he said to Anderson, the vice-president.

"Such as it is. With you high school fellows and De Armond's boys out, we haven't much to choose."

"Don't you believe it. If you don't have a nine that could wallop the average amateur team, it'll be your own fault. Legate and I are planning to send our nines against yours, and we don't expect to find it any cinch.

"There's another thing, Hans," Lorimer added. "When we started the club we said, you remember, that in sports where the schools were already organized we should feel that our first duty was owed to our school teams. Well, we feel that way yet. But any time when dates don't conflict, there isn't one of us but would sub on the club nine or help it any way we could. How's that, Rye?"

"That's right," said Ryerson Legate, the

54 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

captain of the De Armond team. "Wish I could turn the thing round and borrow their battery, Anderson and Stacy, and a few of their heavy hitters," he added. Hans flushed with pleasure.

"Speaking of Stacy reminds me that Terry wanted me to ask him what other fellows will go in for the shot-put," said Jack. "That's a long way ahead, but Terry's bound the club's first field games shall break the record."

"How is Terry?"

"Restless. Doctor's sitting on his chest. Seems to be afraid of water on the knee, from that crack he got Saturday, and says he'll have to keep quiet for a few days. Drop around, you fellows, and give him a good word. Days are pretty long when you're laid up, you know."

Giving the good word himself, whenever he got the chance, Lorimer spent a busy hour. There were fellows who wanted advice on all kinds of things, as there always were; and the problems of reconstruction that arose, just now, from the attack on the gym, were enough to tax the brains of the best of them.

Mains had been tinkering all the evening at a rowing machine that had been "gutted" with an axe and looked a pretty hopeless case, and now he called Jack over to see the result.

"Oh, call it a day's work, Lou!" Lorimer said. "You've got the slide so it runs all right — I wouldn't have believed anybody could do that

MAINS RETURNS A CALL 55

much — and now you let the rest of it go till next time. I'm tired of holding my own chin up, and I'm going home. If I was a girl, I'd have a good cry."

"Not if you were a Millvale girl," smiled Mains.

As Lorimer returned the smile, it occurred to him that Lou was about the only cheerful person in the gym. He did not know why he should be so. But the fact was that, while Mains worked, he had been thinking out a possible solution of the problem that puzzled the boys — and that was glory enough for anybody.

Four mornings in the week, the director of the gym attended law lectures in Boston, so he could not act at once; but as he stepped off the train at Millvale Tuesday noon, he met the very man he would have chosen to help him — Oscar Stacy, expert iron-worker at the Eagle Mills, and sergeant-at-arms of the athletic club, a representative of the finest type of young American artisan.

"Time on your hands, Oscar?" Mains asked.

"Got all the time there is, if it's to do anything for you, Lou," Stacy answered. "I'm practically my own master, you know, so long as I deliver the goods."

"Going to make a call," Mains explained. "Want you as a witness."

It was no great surprise to Stacy to find that the object of the call was Chap Stanley, the pitcher who had tried to switch Mains over to

56 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

Rel Webb's forces. But it was evidently a surprise to Stanley, and not a pleasant one, when, descending the stairs at his boarding-house in answer to a summons, he ran up against Mains and a fellow who looked even more athletic.

"Arm all right?" Mains asked, after a curt nod.

"So-so."

"Where were you last Saturday afternoon, from two-thirty to four, while our ball game was going on?"

"That any of your business?"

Deliberately and without a word Mains took off his coat and handed it to Stacy. Then he stripped up one sleeve. But at this point Stanley, who had watched these preparations with some alarm, suddenly spoke.

"Say, if you want to know, I was over at our grounds, coachin'," he said.

"Prove that by anybody outside your own gang — anybody a decent man can speak to without holding his nose?"

Stanley reddened with anger.

"Patrolman on that beat saw me, I s'pose," he answered, grumpily. "There's some kind of a dinky shop, grocery or somethin', across the street from the grounds. You might do your Sherlock Holmes stunt there and get some satisfaction."

Mains nodded.

"Now call your landlady," he said. "I'll talk to her. Don't try to give her any tips. 'Twon't be healthy!"

The landlady came and Mains asked a few questions, pretending that he wanted to settle a bet about the hours Stanley kept. It looked as though the woman told the truth, and she gave Webb's pitcher a very good character. When she had gone —

"See here, Stanley," Mains said, "our gym has been smashed up. Probably Webb's gang is in it. We'll land 'em, before we get through. Then we'll pulverize 'em. You're a stranger here. Take a hint. Keep out of queer schemes. If you mix in you'll get mussed up. Enough said!"

Oscar Stacy was chuckling as they left the house, over the brief and businesslike way in which his friend had managed things. But he suddenly sobered as they reached the corner where they would separate.

"Looks as if Webb's gang had come out for blood, doesn't it?" he said. "We've got to smash 'em — hard and quick!"

Just whom they were to smash for the recent outrages, however, seemed hard to tell. Sullivan of Winterton called up the gym a few minutes after Mains got back to it, but only to clear some others who had been suspected.

"About that Winterton crowd that was put off your grounds Saturday afternoon," Sullivan said,

58 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

"we can trace 'em almost to the minute. They came straight home."

So here were Stanley and the Winterton hoodlums vindicated, and the field of search seemed now to show no very suspicious character. It was more in jest than earnest, that Lorimer, meeting the fat boy on Wednesday, said abruptly:

"Found out, January, who broke into the gym?"

"Yes, sir, Hi think Hi 'ave, sir," was the unexpected response.

"What!"

"Yes, sir," January affirmed. "Honly Hi want to keep it to meself a day or two, till Hi'm sure, ye know. 'Twouldn't be fair, ye know, to name 'im till Hi could prove it on 'im."

"That's very true. Better be safe than sorry, and I won't tempt you by asking questions," laughed Lorimer. "But what'll you do when you prove it on him?"

"Harrest 'im hin the name of the law!" said January, solemnly.

CHAPTER VII

CAPTAIN REL'S EXCELLENT BEGINNING

BUT nothing so sensational as a "harrest" disturbed the peace of the next day or the day after that. In fact, nothing happened until Saturday. Then several events took place, one of the most interesting, in some respects, being the opening of Rel Webb's baseball grounds.

Lorimer himself would have liked to watch that opening — if he could have gone in disguise. But this Saturday proved to be one of those days when a fellow has to do what somebody else likes. Not to speak of the opening, Jack couldn't even stay with his own club, much as it needed him; for on Saturday morning his father asked his help and carried him off to Providence on an all-day business trip.

But, even though Lorimer wasn't there to make "one more," Webb had his audience, and a large one.

When the Millvale High School nine, "Lorimer's crowd," was scheduled to play at Roxbridge, that made it certain that Rel's crowd would not lack

60 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

for spectators. To go to Roxbridge and return cost something, and though the high school boys followed loyally to back their team, there were others, many of them, who wanted to see a game at less sacrifice of time and money.

So when Rel led his men, four professionals and six Millvale fellows, on to the diamond, his heart swelled at the sight of an assemblage that packed the grand stand and the bleachers and overflowed along the base lines.

Stein, the Winterton captain, whistled with amazement and delight when he saw the turnout. The "sports" who backed him, meaning principally gamblers of a cheap type, ought to be able to do some business with a crowd like that, he thought.

By way of bettering the gamblers' chances, Stein, like Webb, had added some "ringers." Ostensibly his was the Winterton High School nine, — though, as a matter of fact, he had no more right to that title than Webb had, — but he, had a professional battery from which he hoped great things. And Stein had brought along an umpire, too, and the umpire would be expected to earn his money.

Not only Webb and Stein and the gamblers were pleased with the prospect, but so was Costlow, a plug-ugly from Boston, half Rel's servant and half his friend. "The young man with the bull-terrier face," Rob Marr of Roxbridge had

CAPTAIN REL'S BEGINNING 61

called Costlow, and now the face wore a gratified grin, for here were many of the same kind. No danger of a "tough" being lonely on these grounds! He found congenial company, and it looked as if he might amuse himself any way he pleased.

Rel, who was covering second base himself, won the toss and chose to go to the bat. Stein's imported pitcher was a good one, and he struck out the first two men without any movement on their part. But the third man up, who was Ziegler, Rel's catcher, couldn't seem to get anything that suited him, and took the notion he was being abused.

"A strike, vas dot?" he growled, as the second was called on him. "Off I vas nine feet high and had a reach to match meinsel, I could not reach dot! Call dot a ball, robber!"

"Two balls, two strikes," the umpire repeated. "Play ball!"

Ziegler whistled at him insultingly, and made ready for the next. It came, but he did not swing for it. The catcher took it, and the batsman turned to see what it was.

"Three strikes, out," the umpire said, and Ziegler exploded once more.

"I gif you a dark lantern und a jimmy when I come up again, meinsel!" he cried. "Dot's all you need to be a first-class burglar, ain'd it?"

62 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

The umpire said nothing, only waved him away; but Rel's backstop was one of the kind that would rather fight than eat, and he went off grumbling, and kept it up.

Now, the fact was that Ziegler had no real cause for complaint. The pitcher had put three balls fairly over the plate, and the umpire had honestly said so. But later in the game there were complaints "for cause," and they all came from the Millvale side.

Stein's friends out in the audience were busy, prosperously so. They were ready to bet on anything and everything — whether So-and-so would make a hit, whether a certain side would get a run during a certain inning, or almost any other proposition — they generally took the Winterton end of the bet, and they almost always won.

And the curious thing was that the umpire's close decisions, and some that to the average spectator seemed crooked instead of close, helped the gamblers.

It looked as though there was a "grapevine telegraph," some kind of a signalling system, between that umpire and the betting men from Winterton; and while the crowd was hooting one vicious misjudgment, Captain Webb took occasion to speak to Captain Stein.

"See here, Jake," he said, significantly, "to see your friends running around out there with

CAPTAIN REL'S BEGINNING 63

bunches of money in their fists suggests to me that I'm not getting a square deal."

Stein misunderstood, or pretended to do so.

"You ought to have made 'em pay for the bookmaking privilege," he answered. "Fix that up beforehand, next time, and you'll get your rake-off all right."

"Think I'm kicking because I want their dirty money?" Rel demanded, angrily.

"Well, ain't you?"

Rel doubled his fist and looked at the other fellow. Just at that minute he was sorry that it was his place to set an example of self-control.

"Say, I'd like to soak you, Jake!" he muttered, as he turned away.

It was only a few minutes later that a mushy apple, flung from an unknown quarter, struck the umpire in the side of the neck; half the filthy pulp squashed down inside his collar.

"Throw that scoundrel out!" he yelled, as he mopped the mess vigorously.

"Sure he ought to be thrown out, whoever he is, for not rotten-egging you," yelled a spectator; and at that the bleachers howled with delight.

There would have been trouble long before, probably, had not Millvale, in spite of the umpire, been putting up an excellent game. And in spite of the umpire, Millvale was ahead, and, the bulk of the attendants being Millvale people, that kept them patient and hopeful.

64 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

But in the seventh inning, when the score was nine to seven in favour of Webb's team, the umpire had a touch of insanity or a spasm of honesty, and gave a decision in Millvale's favour, a decision that, as it happened, bit deep into the gamblers' profits.

In the last two innings the rascals from Winterton had found it less easy to make bets than it was at first. Probably most of the fools had been separated from their money already. So when the umpire had that wild turn and gave a judgment the gamblers did not expect, one of them undertook to "welsh," that is, slip away without settling his wagers.

Too many eyes were on him, however. He had not edged off many yards before winners were following. They gave him plenty of rope, so to speak, and he got the idea that he was evading his creditors very cunningly. Finally the foolish man made a dash for his buggy, thinking to get away at once.

Then those who were after him showed that they were in the race. They dragged the fellow back, made him pay up, rolled him in the dirt, and kicked him off the grounds. The incident started half a dozen fights, and trouble-hunters ceased to pay attention to the game, which was as good as over, and went wandering around looking for their favourite commodity.

There were such on the diamond, also, of course, Stein being one. When the game ended,

CAPTAIN REL'S BEGINNING 65

with Millvale the winner by ten to nine, Webb naturally looked for the congratulations which a decent leader always extends to his antagonist. But all Stein said was:

"Humph! I might have known what I'd be let in for!"

"What's that, Jake?" Rel demanded.

"Might have known if I brought over an amateur nine I'd be steering 'em up against professionals!"

"What's that you call your team?"

"Amateurs, of course," Stein asserted; "the Winterton High School nine."

"Mean to say your fellows are all amateurs?"

"Sure they are."

"Why, you measly whelp!" cried Rel. "Your pitcher and catcher are both professionals, paid men, and you can't deny it!"

"You lie!"

Rel answered that in the old-fashioned way, with a smashing blow. Stein was staggered for a minute, but he came back with a rejoinder of the same kind, and the two captains had a lively dialogue with their fists until Webb, senior, managed to get down from the grand stand and across the diamond, and put an end to it.

"Tut, tut!" he said. "Fight your common enemies, — they're numerous enough, — but don't waste your strength in maiming and disfiguring each other! Captain Stein, if my son has inad-

66 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

vertently given offence, I'm sure you will find him willing to make amends. And as for you — "

" I won't! " cried Webb and Stein, in the same breath.

" And yet you both have done so well, made such an excellent beginning," said Webb, shaking his head sorrowfully.

He really thought so. He would have been the most astonished man in Millvale if anybody had told him that the Lorimer crowd heartily agreed with him. But Rel had begun just as his opponents could have wished, by collecting the worst elements that ever patronized the sport — the very gang that Captain Jack and his friends wanted to have attracted somewhere, anywhere, away from their grounds!

CHAPTER VIII

THE ASSISTANT MASCOT STAYS BEHIND

ON that same Saturday afternoon, but fifteen miles west of Millvale, at Roxbridge —

"Sorry you and Lorimer aren't in the game," said Captain Rob Marr to Terry McGrady and Jeff Bussey, the two "cracked pitchers" who had to stay on the bench. "If you all were, there'd be some credit in beating Millvale."

"Sure I'm thinking there'll be some credit in beating us, as it is!" was Terry's grim rejoinder. "Mind, my son," he added, "I'm not denying that you need a victory or two."

"You're hinting at that series we two high schools began last February, for the championship of the county?" Marr asked. "Oh, there's lots of time to gain points for that! I know that Millvale took two of the three hockey games and won the basket-ball game; but there are one or three rowing races, one or three games of baseball, and one or three games of football still to come, you know, each event counting one point — and you're only two points ahead of us yet!

68 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

"By the way," Marr added, "does to-day's game count in that series, as well as in our new suburban league?"

"We're willing," answered Tom Bell, who in Jack Lorimer's absence was in charge of the nine.

"Then send out your pony battery and watch us ride it. Our principal, Horton, is out of town to-day. There's nobody to cast the evil eye on us, so we can do things!"

Marr laughed as he spoke, and Tom Lorimer and Will Reed, the "ponies," took it as good-naturedly as it was meant. With the elder Lorimer away and Terry and Jeff crippled, everybody wanted to give the fairest possible chance to Millvale's youngest players, nor had any one expressed a serious doubt that they would do well.

"Take your time," had been Captain Jack's last words to his brother. "Don't waste strength throwing to bases, unless you're certain of nailing a man. Play for the batter. Help your backstop all you can, and don't forget your signals."

Probably Tom heeded some of the advice. Anyhow, in the first inning, honours were easy. Only one hit was made off him, and each side got one run.

But in the next inning the worst thing happened that could have happened, so far as Tom was concerned. He retired the side in one-two-three order, and his head was visibly enlarging as he strutted back to the bench.

"Easy, easy!" said Terry, warningly. "You did well, boy, but don't run away with the idea that it's children you're toying with and you can do it every time with your eyes shut!" But Tom only smiled the smile of a conquering hero, and waited impatiently for his next chance.

Confidently he went forward at length to get the better of Catherwood — the heaviest and shrewdest hitter in the Roxbridge team. "I'm a wonder, and anything from me is good enough," was what Tom's face expressed. Nor did his confidence seem to slacken when Marr's big backstop made his first offering good for a two-bagger.

His head was lower, though, by the time the half ended, for nine Roxbridge men came to the plate and three of them got around the bases — and it might have been four, if Janvrin had not climbed for and dragged down a high liner that nobody expected him to reach.

As Tom started toward the box to open the fourth inning, with Roxbridge four to Millvale's two, Tom Bell had a word to say.

"Brace up now, Tom!" he muttered. "Make every ball your best one. You haven't the Roxbridge pitcher's speed, but your head work is better than his, and you can land this game if you play ball all the time. Don't do the baby act and get mad, don't turn fool and be careless, just put up the man's game we've all seen you play!"

70 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

Young Lorimer braced. Though Marr's men got three more runs, the fielders rather than he were responsible for two of them; but the brace came too late, and those three runs were the margin of victory.

"Seven to four in favour of Roxbridge — and the winning runs all made in that one inning when I started in thinking I was too good for my company and ought to be twirling for a league nine!" said Tom, to the other Tom, Bell, with a rueful smile. "I know better now, but it's too late to do any good."

"Nonsense!" Terry broke in. "Sure we'll put you up against Roxbridge next time, and have you beat 'em!"

"And how could we expect to play winning ball," he added, whimsically, "while Royal Burr, the mascot, is away off at the gym, and January Jones, the assistant mascot, is — somewhere else?"

"Where is January, anyhow?" Tom Bell asked. But nobody knew.

On the previous Saturday, when Millvale played Doverdale on the home grounds — the day the gym was entered and damaged — January's foster-father, Mr. O'Brien, had sent him to Boston on an errand. But to-day, as half a dozen of the fellows knew, he had fully intended to accompany the team, and how or why he had dropped out, nobody could understand.

THE ASSISTANT MASCOT 71

The truth was that January was doing detective work.

It went to his heart to miss that Roxbridge trip, for he had never seen a match game of ball. But he had set out to discover who broke into the gym, and at this stage of the investigation there was a woman he wanted to talk to, a woman who, on Saturday afternoon, would be through with the week's work and have nothing on her mind but the Sunday baked beans!

Martha Perkins was her name. She was housekeeper for Artemus Blodgett, alias "Blackbeard," and his wife Arethusa, otherwise known as "Creepy Moses." Mrs. Blodgett had formerly conducted a girls' school, in which May Roxton was for a time a pupil, and Blodgett himself had served as a substitute teacher in the high school, so they were known to all the young people in Millvale.

Not favourably known, however, for they were a cranky and quarrelsome pair and sworn enemies of the Lorimer crowd, Mr. Webb, Rel's father, being their special crony. But that made no difference to Martha the housekeeper, who was just such another independent old Yankee as Seth Lanard. In fact, she was rather fond of January and Jeff Bussey, and as the fat boy waddled up to the back porch of the Blodgett house, he found the door opening in token of welcome.

"'Ow do you do, Miss Martha?" the fat boy

72 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

began, politely. "Hi 'ope you're well, ma'am. Hi was a-passink 'ere and Hi thought Hi'd stop and pay me respects, ye know."

Martha smiled and seemed flattered.

"Set down there on the porch, January, while I get ye some doughnuts," she said. "It's a nice mild day, and I was jest comin' out for a mouthful of air."

It is nobody's business how many doughnuts January ate. He ate all that were offered him. But then, Martha's doughnuts would have made an athlete break training.

"Seems to me it's hawful lonesome 'ere, ye know," January suggested, after awhile, as he munched contentedly. "Don't hever hanybody go by?"

"That's jest what they do sence Mis' Blodgett, she that was Mr. Blodgett's ma, died," said the housekeeper, with a bitter chuckle. "They all go by; ain't any of 'em comes in — 'ceptin' a few like old Webb, the lawyer. And if it was my case I sh'd say Webb's room was enough sight better'n his company!"

January leaned forward and pretended to look closely after one of those infrequent wayfarers — almost the first man he had seen since he came on the street.

"Hi thought 'e was Costlow, Mr. Webb's 'ired man," he explained. "Do you know Mr. Costlow?"

THE ASSISTANT MASCOT 73

"Oh, yes, he comes here once in awhile on some errand or nuther. I never take much notice of him. Always seemed to me there was somethin' wrong with him — somethin' lackin'. Don't know's I ought to say that, nuther, for he's done me good turns when I wanted things and couldn't stop to go to the store. Why, 'twas only last Saturday he found me a-fussin' over that hen-house door, and he took a latch out of his pocket and put it on for me."

January pricked up his ears. But he spoke carelessly enough.

"'E's a locksmith, you think?" he said.

"Why, I s'pose he must be, come to think of it, seein's he had that thing right in his pocket. It's a funny-lookin' contraption, too," Martha added. "Come here and I'll show ye."

She led the way from the back of the house to the shed in which she kept her small flock of hens, and, opening the door, signed January to look at Costlow's handiwork. The fat boy looked — not for the first time, for the latch, as Martha called it, a metal clasp and pin, was one of three that Oscar Stacy had hammered out, with great care and pains, for three of the inner doors of the gym.

Costlow had put it on backwards and upside down. Perhaps he meant to do that, so that on the outside of the door little would be visible but a knob of wrought iron, which nobody would

74 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

ever notice, much less identify. Yet he must have felt perfectly safe about placing it, for he knew Blodgett and Webb were cronies, and the chances were that none of the Lorimer crowd would ever approach the premises.

All this didn't matter. The thing was there, and Costlow had put it there, and now there was only one detail January needed to learn. His look of admiration slowly changed to bewilderment.

"Hit's prime, ye know!" he said. "But 'ow could Mr. Costlow be hin two places at once, Saturday? Hi thought 'e was hin town all hafternoon, ye know."

Martha stood still and thought a minute.

"It was between four and five when he was here," she answered. "Nearer half-past four than anything else. I know, because I jest watered my baked beans, and I do that on the half-hours. He was hot and flustered, and I give him three or four drinks o' water, and he hung round an hour or so."

"'E'd been hexercisin', maybe, same as hus hathletes," January said. Then he changed the subject, and soon he got away and sped back to town. Now his "case" was made up, and all he wanted was that evening should come. There was to be a special meeting of the High School Athletic Association, and here things might be put in train to bring the scoundrel to justice.

THE ASSISTANT MASCOT 75

But when the time did come, the fat boy was too bashful to tell his story.

Finally he got Captain Jack off in a corner and whispered it to him, and within thirty seconds Lorimer was on his feet, seeking recognition from President Tom Bell.

"Mr. Chairman," he said, "I move the rules be suspended, and we telephone Mr. Seth Lanard and invite him to be present at this meeting. Our friend January has something to tell that he ought to hear."

"Hi 'aven't! Hi don't know 'ow to tell it, ye know!" the fat boy protested; and he was still arguing along that line when Mr. Lanard, hastily summoned, came tearing in, with his mouth full of questions.

"Well, Mr. Chairman, since January has an attack of stage fright and doesn't want to talk, I'll tell it for him," Captain Jack said. "The story begins last Tuesday, when Mains and January were making the final clean-up of the rubbish our visitor of Saturday left behind him. In the mess January found a key-ring of a peculiar pattern. He had never seen but one like it. That one was in the possession of Costlow, the hoodlum friend of the Webbs.

"That aroused January's suspicions, of course. He's been tracking Costlow's movements all the week. He's located him as in this neighbourhood during the ball game. And this afternoon at

76 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

Blodgett's place January found one of the three wrought-iron latches, or hasps, that Oscar Stacy hammered out for our inside doors. Costlow left it there.

"Any one of us could identify those hasps. Oscar put a lot of time into them — they're works of art, you know — and there are distinguishing features that he could swear to. So with Costlow leaving his own property here, and taking ours away, it looks as though January had him tied up in a hard knot."

"Three cheers for January Jones!" roared old Seth Lanard, before the words had hardly died away; and before the cheers had ceased, the club's backer was making his way toward January, the bank-note in his hand declaring his purpose.

But January began to cry.

"Hi don't want your money, be 'anged to it!" he roared. Rage and grief were in his tones, and Mr. Lanard stopped short and stared at him, waiting for what he might say next. But the fat boy didn't say.

"Mr. Lanard offered the reward, January," Captain Jack suggested. "That's on behalf of the club, you know. The club means to pay it. What'll we do with the money, if you won't take it?"

January stopped bellowing.

"Give it back to the club, hin course, toward fixink hup the gym," he said.



"‘THREE CHEERS FOR JANUARY JONES!’ ROARED OLD SETH LANARD."

THE ASSISTANT MASCOT 77

"All right!" Mr. Lanard approved.

"See here!" he added, briskly. "I don't know's we can scare up Judge Jackson and get him to issue a warrant to-night, but January and me are a-goin' to try it, by gum! Don't let this business leak out, boys! If Costlow should get a hint we had suspicions, he'd be runnin' for it — and that gosh-blamed old scoundrel, Jim Webb, would help him!"

CHAPTER IX

QUESTIONS OF PRINCIPLE — ANSWERED

MR. LANARD was wrong, perhaps. At any rate, when Costlow was arrested, the Webbs refused to have anything to do with him. They took the ground that, if guilty of the offence, he should be punished. And, finding himself thus deserted by his "friends" and realizing that if he fought the charge he would probably fare worse, the hoodlum pleaded guilty and accepted a sentence of six months' imprisonment. At all of this Mr. Lanard wondered.

"Don't ye s'pose the Webbs knew that Costlow was goin' to come in here and smash things?" he asked.

"No, sir. I think that was Costlow's own crazy idea," Captain Jack answered. "He hated us on his own account, you know, because we're not his kind."

"Don't seem as if the Webbs left us any chance to get at 'em, does it?" the old man growled. "It's a funny thing, by gum, if this whole crowd

QUESTIONS OF PRINCIPLE 79

has got to lie down and own up licked by a pair like that!"

"Why not put Soapy on the trail, next time we suspect 'em of anything crooked?"

Horace White said it, most innocently, and Captain Jack, looking at him sharply, could see no sign of any mean motive. Yet Horace knew better than to make such a suggestion, and there was a "streak" in his nature that, when another fellow seemed successful or popular, prompted him to "take him down a peg." Lorimer's mouth set in a way that told those who knew him that the matter would not be allowed to end there. But it was Archie Smith himself, "Soapy" that once was, who asked:

"What does that mean, White?"

"Why, you used to be chummy with Webb's gang," the other fellow explained. "Why not pretend to stand in with 'em again, until you get the points we want?"

"Humph!" Tom Bell snorted disgustedly. Captain Jack's lip curled, but he waited to see how others would take it. Unfortunately, Mr. Lanard took it the wrong way.

"You've got to fight the devil with fire," he said. "I dunno but that's a good idee."

Smith stared at the old man a minute, next at White, then from one to another. It was near his locker that they happened to be standing. With fingers that trembled a little he opened it,

80 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

took out some small possessions of his, and then, leaving the key in the lock, turned and faced the group.

"All I've got to say about that is, that I'm through with sneaking and double-dealing!" he cried. "I'll see the whole gang of you in Halifax before I do any such dirty trick as White suggested! Good-bye!" and he made as if to leave the gym.

"Hold on, Archie," said Captain Jack, quietly. "I'm with you!"

"Me, too," said Tom Bell.

"Sure there's several more of us, I'm thinking," added Terry McGrady.

"Strikes me if anybody goes on this account it'll be the pup that yelped in the first place!" Stacy growled, with his eyes on White.

"Well, say!" White exclaimed — and he was either surprised or pretended to be — "haven't you all been boosting January for his detective work? What do you jump on me for, when I say that another fellow could do some?"

"There was no treachery in anything January did," Captain Jack said, sternly. "He used his wits to pick up bits of information and piece them together, that was all. You're proposing to shake hands with a man in order to get near enough to stab him in the back. Seems to me you owe Smith and the rest of us an apology."

QUESTIONS OF PRINCIPLE 81

"Oh, all right — consider yourselves apologized to," Horace answered, airily.

"Better go and wash your mouth out, too," Stacy suggested. "You take it too easy to suit me, White. If you were a few years younger I'd spank you, and if you were my size I'd go in and muss you up, you hear?"

"Oh, let it drop, Oscar!" urged Captain Jack. "Put your things back in your locker, Archie, and forget it, you and all the rest of you. We're all liable to say foolish things, and it doesn't do any harm to have a clear understanding on a matter like this."

White, for one, seemed willing to let the subject drop, but he was pretty sour about it. Perhaps, thought Captain Jack, he was planning a revolt against "bossism" — he had had one cantankerous spell, in the early days of the club — and merely raised the issue to see how many would stand with him. If that was the case, he knew by this time that he had raised the wrong issue. The heart of the club was sound!

Later, when Captain Jack reviewed the episode, he told himself with a grim smile that the trouble might be that White was not a sportsman but a "sport." There is a vast difference between the two, and a failure to realize it sometimes leads to unpleasant results. So it was with Rel Webb, about this time. He made a mistake in sizing up Principal Blaisdell, of Millvale High.

82 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

Blaisdell was an athlete and a sportsman, and mainly as such — because it offended his sense of fair play to see a boy ignored by a whole school — he had urged Captain Jack to try to alter the attitude which everybody held toward Rel. Facts that had since come to his knowledge had led him to think that perhaps there was a better reason for the boycott than narrow prejudice. But he had his bread and butter to think about, and the elder Webb was a member of the school committee and a rich and unscrupulous man; and Blaisdell would have tried to keep on good terms with father and son if, now, Rel had not made him furious by assuming that since he was a sportsman he was also a "sport."

Rel, poor fool, believed his "opening" had been a great success. His team had won; fast ball had been played; people had taken things in a free and easy way and seemed to have a good time. He overlooked the riot of foul talk and profanity, gambling and fighting, or assumed they were "all in the day's work," and he had been rather expecting that Blaisdell would congratulate him on making such a fine start. But the principal seemed to have nothing to say; and finally Rel accosted him one morning on the way to school.

"Sorry I didn't see you at our opening last Saturday, Mr. Blaisdell," he said, blithely.

QUESTIONS OF PRINCIPLE 83

"Business called me to Boston that day," was the principal's brief reply.

"I suppose you've heard that the two nines played bang-up ball and we had a lively time," Rel persisted.

"I have heard much about the game — some things not pleasant to hear."

If Rel had shown good judgment he would have stopped right there, instead of encouraging the principal to go on. But it was never easy for Rel to realize that he could possibly make a mistake, and he began to angle for details.

"That little mix-up at the end between Stein and me, you mean?" he said. "Yes, I know it looked bad, but when a fellow's blood is up he doesn't stop to think —"

"Other things looked worse," Blaisdell interrupted, crisply. "Here were two nines purporting to be amateur, but half composed of professionals; one of them, Winterton, assuming to represent a high school, but having no more right to the school name than the other had; drinking, swearing, and fighting going on unrestrained among the spectators; a score of cheap gamblers and fakirs plying their trade unmolested; in short, principals and accessories, scenes and surroundings, with which decent people could have little sympathy."

Rel's face turned green. His tongue was ready, as a rule, but this time it took him a minute or so to think of something to say.

84 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

"Sounds as though Jack Lorimer's gang had been filling you up!" he snarled at length.

"That impudent suggestion hardly calls for an answer," was the calm reply. "Perhaps I may properly add, however, in fairness to all concerned, that I have had no conversation on this subject with Lorimer or any of his friends, and all my information comes from unprejudiced persons of my own age, or older."

"Fossils, eh?" Rel sneered, insolently.

Mr. Blaisdell kept his temper. Though he had never liked Rel, it seemed deplorable that a boy with his ability and opportunities should go so far wrong; and he felt the responsibility for his welfare that any good teacher feels for any boy or girl under his charge. He decided to be a little more definite.

"Let me say, further, Webb," he went on, "that, in a narrow view of the case, what you do outside school hours and away from the building is no concern of mine. In the broader view it is my business. When you promote an enterprise that bristles with false pretences, and when you associate with the very riffraff of society, your action reflects dishonour upon this school. You are clever enough to know that, and I regret that either you cannot see that you are doing discreditable things or that, if you do realize it, you deliberately pursue them."

QUESTIONS OF PRINCIPLE 85

"Huh! and I always thought you were a sport!" Rel muttered.

"God forbid! I'm a sportsman — that's why I abominate anything tricky or low!

"With your fine mind, your sound body, and your backing you can accomplish anything, Webb," the principal added, on a sudden impulse. "Cease misusing your gifts and opportunities! Turn about and come with the rest of us! Give us a chance to be as proud of you as we might be!"

They had reached the steps of the schoolhouse, and Mr. Blaisdell, wheeling abruptly, put out his hand. But Rel ignored it, and, though he did not meet the principal's eyes, the look in his own was one of rage and hatred.

"Guess I'll get my father to finish this conversation," Rel growled. Turning his back on the principal, he walked toward the basement door.

Smiling rather sadly, Mr. Blaisdell pursued his way to his office.

That was a threat, and it meant that henceforth he had two bitter enemies, one of whom was able to strike at his means of livelihood. But as an honest man the principal felt no regrets. He had not invited the discussion. When it was forced upon him he had told the truth, that was all, and if the senior Webb acted as though he wanted or needed to hear it — why, he, Blaisdell, would tell it again.

CHAPTER X

WARS AND RUMOURS OF WARS

IN these spring days, many an athlete wished he could be in two places at once. With all respect to Principal Blaisdell — who was popular with others, if not with Rel Webb — the high school building was not one of those places. The baseball field was one, and the other was Lily Lake, the scene of summer as well as winter sports.

Mysteriously a boat-house had arisen at the lake not long before. Just as mysteriously was it stocked. Happening up there one morning, soon after old Seth Lanard had admitted that he owned the building and would rent it to the athletic club at a nominal price, Captain Jack found four shells, an eight, a four, and two singles — but nothing to tell whence they came or for whom they were destined.

“Don’t know nothin’ about it!” Mr. Lanard affirmed, when Lorimer taxed him with the responsibility. “I s’pose they belong to somebody, seems ’s if they must, but as long as they’re in your house you can use ’em, can’t ye, till Mr. Whatyecallhim comes and takes ’em away?”

Of course the old man was stretching the truth a little, or, rather, a great deal, for there could be no doubt that he had bought the beautiful craft and taken this means to ensure that his splendid present to the club should not be refused. Meantime, they could not be set adrift, and it seemed rather foolish to buy other boats and let these lie idle, and —

“Why shouldn’t we use ’em?” Ben Cashman said. “Uncle Seth’s having the time of his life, since the club started, and it’s the cheapest fun he ever had, too. The way he got us guessing about the boat-house tickled him ’most to death, you know, and I vote we fall in with the new scheme and help him keep up the joke.”

Just to show that they saw through the generous deception, the boys got a brass plate inscribed, “The Lanard,” which they affixed to the big boat with solemn ceremony; but, though the old man’s eyes twinkled, he only repeated: “Shucks! I don’t know nothin’ about ’em,” and they had to let it go at that.

The high school athletic association, as an association, had never gone in very strongly for rowing, and it was the athletic club that hired the boat-house. But, by the terms of the challenge for the county championship series, the high school boys had to row Roxbridge “one race or three, singles, fours, or eights;” and when it was decided that there should be one race, between

88 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

eights, the club offered the use of the *Lanard*, and the high school fellows got busy.

That was no idle phrase, either, for the best oarsmen were members of the nine also. Roxbridge wished to row the race on the first Saturday in May, the only Saturday when no league game was scheduled, and it was not easy to "fit in" the necessary practice with preparations for the match which was to take place at Winterton on the Saturday preceding.

Yet in one sense that game itself was practice. It cultivated coolness and self-restraint, and it encouraged one or two of the fellows to "get their muscle up."

Stein and his gang of hoodlums were very much in evidence. It could hardly be said that they "played favourites," for the Winterton players, like the Millvale visitors, were targets for stones, decayed fruit, and verbal abuse. But Horace White and Jeff Bussey, if anybody, caught the larger share of these unpleasant attentions — Horace because he had a temper that was easily roused, and Jeff because he sat on the players' bench with his hand tied up, and the hoodlums probably thought he couldn't defend himself.

Millvale won the game. And then —

"'Ip, 'ip, 'ooroar!" bellowed January Jones, the fat boy. "'Ip, 'ip, 'ooroar for Winterton too!"

That was about the way all Millvale felt. They

knew Parkhurst's boys were not responsible for the riotous behaviour of some spectators, and as between the teams every player felt friendly to every other.

With two exceptions they could and did speak for themselves on this point. Horace White and Jeff Bussey disappeared as the game ended, and it was an hour before Horace turned up again. He was in a surly temper, and it was only to Lorimer that he explained his absence.

"Looked for Stein," he growled. "Couldn't find him."

And it was a half-hour later still when Jeff Bussey appeared, ambling into the group just as the boys were preparing to start for home. One of Jeff's eyes was shut, his lower lip was cut, and his nose looked like an overgrown tomato, but never had he worn a more cheerful grin than he did just now.

"Say, Jeff," Horace cried, enviously. "You found 'em, didn't you?"

"I bate ye!"

"Sure you look like it," Terry suggested.

"Who, me?" Jeff answered. "Say, Terry, you just ought to see the other feller, Jake Stein's chum!"

But this was the only actual war that occurred while the race was still in prospect, though to be sure there were threats of trouble in more than one quarter.

90 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

For one thing, January Jones, "hassistant mascot" for Millvale, came in contact with the Derry mascot, and showed distinct signs of jealousy. "'Rastus," as the Derry fellows called him, was a coloured boy, six feet two inches tall, and weighing only ninety-seven pounds; and even though he lacked the fat boy's fog-horn voice, January seemed to fear, probably with some reason, that this extraordinary figure would win more notice on the playing field than he himself ever could.

Again, Principal Blaisdell of the high school was in difficulties — and everybody seemed to be finding it out. In fact, this was Lawyer Webb's work, and it was his intention that the whole city should know Mr. Blaisdell was deeply in debt and being pushed for payment.

The principal received a fair salary, and, having the simple tastes of an athlete and no expensive habits, he would have lived very comfortably and saved money had circumstances favoured. But Mrs. Blaisdell had been ill for two years, and at great expense her husband had been sending her to half the health resorts in the country, while he was being robbed by incompetent and wasteful "help" at home.

It was evident to anybody who stopped to think about it that Blaisdell must be running behind. But he was the kind of man who doesn't talk much about his troubles, so nobody else

thought much about them — until collectors began to come around the schoolhouse.

The explanation of that sudden activity on their part was that Webb had set afloat a rumour that Blaisdell was planning to file a petition in bankruptcy. When they heard that, all his creditors started to get ahead of the wreck. If they could worry the principal into paying a bill in full, they wouldn't have to accept a possible dividend of ten cents on the dollar.

Some of these creditors were under the direct influence or control of Webb, and to such he gave the order in so many words: "Keep after him! Push him!

"When it becomes notorious, a subject of gossip, that bill collectors are all the time dogging Mr. Blaisdell's footsteps, even in the schoolhouse, it will soon be agreed that he is hardly the proper person for principal of the Millvale High School." Thus quietly, but with a malicious gleam in his eyes, Webb outlined his scheme to his young hopeful, Rel.

"And about the time Mr. Blaisdell fails of re-appointment as principal, I fancy it will dawn upon him that to go out of his way to offer opposition to us Webbs was singularly unwise," he added.

"That's the stuff, father! Soak him!" Rel cried. And so Webb did — or, rather, he did his agents.

92 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

Blaisdell's mail was full of bills and letters more or less urgently asking him to "remit." Duns waylaid him everywhere and at all hours. Those who were set on by Webb direct chased him to school, and made themselves as conspicuous and impudent as they durst.

But this very energy of pursuit caused the undoing of the scheme. Old Seth Lanard heard of it. Shrewdly suspecting that Webb pursued Blaisdell because Blaisdell had shown friendliness for the Lorimer crowd, Mr. Lanard acted at once.

"I put one spoke in Webb's wheel to-day," the old man said, chuckling grimly, when he chanced to meet Captain Jack on the night before the race. "I sent for Blaisdell to come and see me, and his bills'll all be paid by Monday night. Same time I'll get a line on people I've been dealin' with, that have let Webb use 'em in this business, and if I don't make 'em sorry they ever heard that gosh-blamed shyster's name —"

He stopped short, shaking his head savagely. Captain Jack, heartily glad for Blaisdell, who had gained this powerful and faithful friend, felt an impulse of pity for the business men who, by playing into Webb's hands, had made Lanard their enemy. They would be sorry, not a doubt of it.

"But, speakin' about dirty tricks," the old man went on, "I don't s'pose there's any chance for

Webb or his tools to upset that race of yours, is there? "

" No, sir, I hardly see how they could," Captain Jack answered.

Nevertheless, though Lily Lake was nearly four miles from the business centre, Lorimer rode straight out to the boat-house and tried all the locks and fastenings.

CHAPTER XI

A RACE WITH AN ODD FINISH

EVERYTHING was safe and unharmed, apparently, and so it seemed to be next morning also; and some of the relief that Lorimer felt translated itself into the enthusiasm with which Roxbridge was welcomed.

The Roxbridge shell had come over on a platform car the previous day, and had been stored in the boat-house; and, professing that they felt lonesome when away from it, Rob Marr's boys began to drop in, one by one and two by two, quite early in the day. Anything in Millvale was theirs.

And it was, with few exceptions, a generous and friendly crowd that lined the banks of the lake and river when the shell was put into the water for a little preliminary warm-up. In fact, many knowing spectators were inclined to favour the Roxbridge chance.

"Lorimer's boys are heavy, but light heavies, so to speak; the visitors are heavies," Principal Blaisdell said, in a confidential aside to May Roxton's father. He smiled as he spoke, as if to

show that he realized the words sounded rather ridiculous. Yet both men knew what he meant.

"It may be an old-fashioned notion of mine, but I like to see substantial men in a boat," the principal continued. "If they pull their weight, you're pretty sure of longer reach and more staying power."

"Well, I suppose our boys are the heaviest we've got," Mr. Roxton answered, with a whimsical smile. "I should say their real weakness might be lack of training. Haven't been rowing more than two or three weeks, have they?"

"Oh, I don't attach so much importance to that. It doesn't take a great deal of time to 'get into condition,' you know, when boys keep in condition the year round; and ours were all good oarsmen when they began.

"Watch them get away now," he added, as a dozen fellows swung down the float with the shell and then stepped aside for the crew.

"All ready?" This was Coxswain Tom Lorimer, a minute later. "Shove her out there — touch her, 2 and 4 — paddle, 4 — bow oars, easy — forward all!" and the shell swept out on the water like a graceful thing of life.

With Captain Jack Lorimer stroke, McGrady No. 7, Chapin No. 6, Harriott No. 5, Bell No. 4, Cashman No. 3, Bussey No. 2, and Janvrin bow, it was, as Mr. Roxton had suggested, the best

96 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

Millvale had — a crew that ought to give a good account of itself.

At low speed, not more than twelve to the minute, the shell went down the lake, leaving the upper reaches, where the spectators were gathered, to the visiting crew. There was rhythm in the stroke, and the boys put a good deal of life into it, but they kept it down to 20, waiting the word that would call for all their energy.

A pistol-shot and the blare of a megaphone, "Crews prepare for the start!" and the eights lined up just below the float, Roxbridge inside, to pass that long one moment which precedes a contest.

"Are you ready? Go!"

Sixteen oars gripped the water almost as one. Forward and backward bent the coxswains to set the stroke, while through their miniature megaphones they gave the instructions that would go far toward winning or losing the race. A roar of encouragement rose from the crowd on shore.

"Why, Roxbridge is going ahead!" cried one of the Millvale girls. And it was true that Rob Marr's fellows were already half a length in advance. May Roxton glanced at the tiny watch on her bracelet, then at the Roxbridge coxswain, and back again at the watch.

"Roxbridge started at 26, our boys at about 22 or 24," she explained. "Ah, now they're both

lifting it a little — but Roxbridge keeps three or four strokes ahead."

"Why don't our fellows race?" demanded the other girl, in a tone of anguish.

"They will, when the time comes. Races are won at the finish, you know, not at the start."

Slowly the speed crept up. Yet inch by inch the visitors seemed to be widening their lead. That was no surprise to Lorimer's crew, and it caused them no grief. They wanted Roxbridge to row all she knew how in that first mile.

"Eyes in the boat, 3!" barked Coxswain Tom through his little megaphone. "Don't rush the slide, 2! Hands up, 6! Lengthen out, port! Catch, catch, catch!"

Like a perfect machine, built for one purpose, and serving it to the uttermost, Captain Jack was passing on the stroke to his boat-mates.

"They're rowing 40 or thereabouts," Coxswain Tom said. "But they're chopping, and we're just about holding them at half a length.

"No splashing, 5!" he added. "Eyes in the boat, 3!"

"Our fellows are safe enough," muttered Principal Blaisdell, on shore, to Mr. Roxton. "The right tactics for Roxbridge would be to put that extra weight of hers into the blades at the catch — but she's wasting it."

Now, on the last quarter of the first mile, Mill-

98 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

vale was creeping up a little. Roxbridge was still rowing strongly and without signs of distress, but she was rowing less evenly; and Tom Lorimer was banking on his belief that, under the strain of two miles at 40, that raggedness would grow more pronounced every moment.

"Lengthen out, 4!" he called. "Eyes in the boat, bow!"

"We might take her at the turn," he said, in a lower tone.

"Later — last quarter," were the words formed by Captain Jack's lips. He realized, as well as Blaisdell or anybody else, that Roxbridge had heavier men. It would take time to pump them out. If the real race was begun too soon his fellows might not stand the strain, and the others might be equal to a winning spurt.

As Millvale rounded the turning buoy, less than half a length separated her from the leader — and still she was inching forward. Some idea of the real situation had sifted through the crowd on the bank, and Millvale yells began to sound a note of exultation.

"'Ip, 'ip, 'ooroar!" boomed January Jones. "Hall hup and 'oller for Millvale — Hi want Royal Burr to 'ear it. 'Ip, 'ip, 'ip, 'ooroar, and another for Captain Jack!"

"Boat's leaking!" Tom said, suddenly.

"Hit her up, then!" breathed his brother.

Tom took one glance ahead. They were nearing

the last half. Still Roxbridge hung less than half a length in the lead.

"Eyes in the boat!" barked Tom. "Watch for the word. When you get it, use your legs — every pound! Push the bottom out of her!"

"Lengthen out, all! Hit her up, now! Legs, legs, legs! Push, push, push, push!" and as he spoke he sent the stroke up to 40, and, as the shell dashed forward under the new impetus, sheered in a little that he might clear and pass the leader.

"Catch, catch, catch, catch!" bawled Marr's coxswain. "No chopping! Less splashing! Legs in it, starboard!"

But Roxbridge had shot her bolt, rowed her race, and was running out of steam. In the next fifty yards Millvale lapped her, and was steadily creeping forward, when —

Crack! Harriott's outrigger fetched loose at the catch and nearly twisted the oar from his hand. It took both coxswains by surprise. Just for an instant the shells swung together and touched.

"Clear away!" roared Tom Lorimer. "Trim the boat!"

Trim her they did, heroically. Harriott, No. 5, was useless now. That meant that Chapin, No. 6, on the port side, must cease rowing. Why should the shell carry dead weight?

As the other six settled back, with only an instant's pause, into that winning stroke, Ned and Will, moving in perfect unison, kicked their feet

100 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

from the straps, grasped their oars, rose in their places and — jumped overboard.

“Eyes in the boat!” cried Tom. “Hit her up! Put your legs into it! Push, push, push, push!”

“By Jove!” gasped Mr. Roxton, watching from the shore. “Aren’t going to drown, are they? No, there’s a launch picking them up.

“By Jove!” he added, “I believe our boys are going to win in spite of it.”

Six men in one shell, eight in the others; with the eight, beef and brawn; with the six, unity, determination, and the pluck that never knows when it is whipped.

Eight men who had spent their strength too soon; six who had husbanded theirs. The life was going out of their craft, for, as Tom had told them, the water was coming in; but they sent her along as though she was light and they were fresh from the boat-house.

“‘Ip, ‘ip, ‘ip, ‘ooroar!” bellowed January Jones. “One more push for me and the wildcat!”

One more did it. With a final impulse that gathered and combined all their strength and courage and hope of victory, Captain Jack’s crew drove their shell across the line, winners by a yard.

Ten minutes later, in the boat-house, Marr of Roxbridge and Lorimer of Millvale faced each other, with smiles which speedily grew into laughter.

"Shake!" said the visiting captain.

"You can claim a foul, you know," Captain Jack suggested, as their hands met. "We bumped into you, no disputing that, and this doesn't count as a race unless you say so."

"Nonsense! It was as much my coxswain's fault as yours. You've beaten us, and we'll let it go at that. Only thing I'm sorry for," Marr added, with a grin, "is that I couldn't be on the bank to see those two fellows of yours go overboard. Great stunt, that was! How'd they happen to think of it?"

"Oh, that was Lou Mains's idea. We took it up to please him, and practised it for the sport of the thing, but we never expected to use it in a race — although," Jack added, grimly, "we've learned by experience that almost anything may happen."

Of course that was all Greek to the visitor. But after the crews had put themselves through a course of sprouts, as Jeff Bussey used to say, and got their clothes on, they went back to the boat-house, and Captain Jack, going over the shell from bow to stern, learned a few things.

"Short screws put into that outrigger, in place of those that belonged there," he said. "Wonder it didn't drop off long before it did!

"We'll have to strip her completely to find that leak, though," he added. "Whether a seam's been opened, or whether the skin's punc-

102 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

tured — see those little dots that look like pinholes, there in the shadow of that rib? — Well, I can't tell, but she's been fixed somehow so the water seeps in."

"Say, January!" old Seth Lanard roared. "What's the matter with your turning detective again? We don't know who worked this scheme against the boat crew, and we want to locate him or them. What say?"

"Hi'll do me bloomink best, sir," January answered.

CHAPTER XII

WHEN HEAVY HITTING DIDN'T COUNT

"He's a wonder, ain't he?" It was old Seth Lanard who spoke, and he was talking to May Roxton about January Jones.

"Say," Mr. Lanard went on, "if I was twenty years younger, so I could have the fun of watchin' him grow up, I'd adopt that boy, I would, by gum! He's goin' to make a mighty good Yankee. I'll tell ye, May — but this has got to be a great big secret betwixt us two — his education is all provided for, right now, whatever happens — and that's what I think o' the fat boy!"

The old man's meaning was clear. He had put January in his will, and the fatherless, though not friendless, lad was sure of a start in life.

"I won't betray your confidence, Mr. Lanard," May said. "I think it's awfully good of you to look out for him. He'd make it up to you if he could. What I like most about January is his faithfulness to his friends. I believe he'd risk his life to help you or do what you asked him."

Mr. Lanard nodded solemnly. He believed it, too.

104 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

Yet January had his weaknesses, as well as virtues, and it was fated he should display one or two at the first league game in Derry.

January was conceited. January was jealous. And never did conceit have a queerer basis, or jealousy find an odder object.

January wasn't proud of anything he had done. On the contrary, he was modest, never cared to be thanked or congratulated, didn't want his achievements to be talked about. Nor, though he had his favourites in and out of the nine, did he try to keep them to himself; in fact, he wanted them to be popular, and resented it fiercely when others failed to like them.

No, the only thing January was really proud of was that he was the club's mascot — or, rather, its "hassistant mascot." It pleased him hugely to strut around and attract attention in that capacity. He had a superstitious idea that the more notice people took, the more certain he was to be a luck-bringer. And because he realized that, when he went to Derry, or when Derry came to Millvale, he would have to divide the applause, he was jealous of Black 'Rastus, the Derry mascot.

So, when they met at Derry, Wednesday afternoon — the game being fixed for that day instead of Saturday, to accommodate Derry — the fat boy was very stiff with the black boy. And when the two teams marched on the field, 'Rastus

heading the home nine and January leading off Millvale, January aimed a scowl that, if it had struck 'Rastus, might have made his teeth rattle.

'Rastus, the lath, ducked and grinned in answer to the hand-clapping and calls of encouragement. January, the roly-poly, lifted his cap, but with an air of dignity, as though all this racket made him rather disgusted. He said as much to 'Rastus, when the darky hunted him up to try to be sociable.

"Hi say, Snowball, what for do you let your gang 'oller at you that way?" he demanded. The good-natured coloured boy stared. It took him a minute or two to realize that January was hostile.

"Dey wa'n't a-hollerin' at me. Dey was laughin' at you, Tubby," he answered.

"See 'ere, you long'-andled blacking-brush, Hi'll double you hup hover the fence, if you give me hany talk," threatened January.

"Hoo, hoo! Hoo, hoo!" cackled the lanky negro. "Bad man, dis is! Spec's he lives in a slaughter-house an' drinks blood!

"Doan yo' lay yo' hand on me, yo' sassy fat brat!" he cried, dodging back a few steps as January doubled his fist and advanced. "Ef yo' does, Ah cert'n'y gwine bus' yo' wide open!"

"Hi could lick you hin me sleep, and never wake hup!" January said, contemptuously, as he kept on to attack. But he didn't have a chance

106 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

to show what he could do, just then, for Captain Jack, coming to the plate to make the toss, suspected what he was up to, and ordered him to the bench.

"They hought to whitewash 'im," January muttered, as he obeyed. "A black skelinton like that might put a 'oodoo hon the game, ye know."

Yet it didn't look as though 'Rastus had done Millvale any harm. She went first to the bat, and in the first inning rapped out four hits, which proved good for two runs.

For Millvale, Terry McGrady was in the box again to-day, with Ned Harriott behind the bat. It wasn't Terry's fault. He was anxious enough to play, now that his knee was all right — provided he could play his rightful position, as he regarded it, that of catcher. But Captain Jack had urged him to make another try at pitching, and, feeling a good deal like a martyr, he finally consented.

Lorimer himself was at short, the hard-hearted principal having held Phil Kavanagh to make up some school work in which he had fallen behind. Otherwise the nine was the same that played Winterton, the batting order being: Bell, White, Lorimer, Harriott, Ford, Cashman, Janvrin, McGrady, Chapin.

Millvale and Derry were practically strangers to each other — that is, in past years they hadn't come together very often, and though the visitors

felt pretty well acquainted with Captain Don Walton and had a hazy recollection of one or two of his players, the battery was completely new to them, and they studied it with interest.

Earle, pitcher, was an undersized, wiry lad, with small gray eyes and stiff, straight, brown hair. Crawford, his catcher, was bulkier, a red-faced, loud-voiced fellow, with a fondness for using his voice, which he gratified, when his team was at the bat, by getting out on the coaches' line.

These two had the air of doing the whole thing. They "flocked by themselves" when awaiting their time at bat; and when they were on the diamond Earle watched their associates in a superior, half-indifferent way that most people would have found pretty galling, while Crawford gave signals and bellowed orders as though the players were all wooden men who couldn't move until they were pushed along.

"Hi say, 'e hought to 'ave a lemon to suck, ye know," muttered January, nodding toward the catcher. "'E'll be too 'oarse to 'oller, pretty soon, and what'll heverybody do then?"

Jeff Bussey laughed and beckoned to 'Rastus, the Derry mascot.

"Where'd they dig up that battery?" Jeff asked. "Ain't natives — Derry fellers — are they?"

"Dey useter be city folks, dey tells me," 'Rastus

108 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

answered. "Families done come heah for deir helf, las' summer, an' stayed, an' dem young gemmen went to de high school. Oh, dey's a-livin' heah all right — mos' a yeah, suh."

"'Ow do you like 'em, Snowball?" asked January.

"Ah doan like 'em, Tubby — no moah dan Ah likes you. Hoo, hoo! Hoo, hoo!"

"Hi say, you cheeky nigger, Hi'm a-goin' to scatter you all hover this field!" the fat boy cried, angrily. But as he waddled forward 'Rastus danced away and Jeff Bussey put out a detaining hand.

"Let the boy alone, you chump!" Jeff said. "He'll be civil enough if you'll give him a chance. Don't go huntin' trouble when you're in a strange place, 'cause ye might find more'n ye could lug home!"

January made no reply, just then; but ten or fifteen minutes later, when a Derry player on third was watching for a chance to get to the plate, he suddenly said: "Hi say, what about Mr. White 'untink trouble, what?"

Horace, whose temper was as fiery as his hair, had turned on Crawford, the Derry catcher, who with more zeal than wisdom was coaching back of third.

"That'll do for you, you big yap!" White growled in tones plainly audible at the bench. "You make any more cracks about my head

setting fire to the ball, and I'll ram 'em both down your throat!"

Jeff didn't answer the fat boy. It was too bad that White should break over discipline; yet Crawford's talk had gone beyond the decent limits of coaching, and almost any fellow would have been tempted to talk back.

Anyway, it seemed to end there. Crawford said no more about the colour of Horace's hair, and Horace got his revenge by touching the base-runner out. The third inning closed with Millvale 3 to Derry's 0. Earle was being hit pretty freely.

Tom Bell was at the bat when Millvale opened the fourth. He was a safe and heavy hitter, and so were two of the three who came next in order.

Earle sent in the hottest thing he could. It went a foot wide of the plate, and Tom never moved. But the ball was still pretty warm when it came to the catcher, and though big Crawford checked the speed he didn't stop it. From his outstretched glove the ball flew off at a tangent toward a little ragamuffin who was standing just outside the line.

Next moment the boy had grabbed it and was pelting from the field at the rate of a mile a minute.

Everybody laughed. Not waiting for the boy to be caught, as he soon was, the umpire signalled the bench for another ball, and one of the Derry subs tossed it out. He threw it to Earle instead

110 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

of the umpire, but neither the umpire nor any one else seemed to notice that informality. Earle wound up, Crawford came nearer the plate, and the game went on.

In this inning Millvale had her first run of ill luck. The boys hit hard, but sharp fielding kept the batters from getting around.

Nor did the situation improve when it came to the fifth. Earle was batted, but the ball refused to travel. Captain Jack had an attack of heart-failure, almost, when, catching the sphere just where he wanted it, and with all his strength, it only sailed over to short-stop, and was easily taken in with one hand.

In one view of the case all this was nothing to fret about, for Millvale had made three runs, while Derry had failed to score. But there were still four innings to go, and three runs gave no such lead that the visitors could afford to be contented with it.

Slowly suspicion was growing up in Lorimer's mind. With all his eyes he watched for evidence to confirm or disprove it.

The sixth inning came and went, leaving the score as it had been. Derry had not yet found the ball. Millvale was reaching it right along, but her heaviest batters got about the same results one can see any day in a small boys' game on any vacant lot.

The seventh — and Lorimer at bat!

He was going to take a chance now. If his suspicions proved ill-founded, it would mean trouble for him and Millvale. If they were correct, then somebody else would have to get out from under. He had weighed all the consequences, and he meant to risk a bold move.

Earle's mean little gray eyes twinkled as he wound up and sent the ball over the plate, hip high.

"One strike!"

Once more the Derry man made ready. It was a ball this time, a slow out-curve just below the waist. From the second it left Earle's hand Jack's eyes were on it. In the second it was curling past him he dropped his bat, put out his hand and caught the ball.

Just one glance he gave it. Then —

"Mr. Umpire," Captain Jack cried, "please confiscate this wad of punk and order Earle to use the ball that is put in play when Derry goes to bat. You'll probably find it inside his shirt!"

CHAPTER XIII

WHY THE DERRY MASCOT RESIGNED

"TIME!" called the umpire. He signalled to Captain Walton, and at the same moment beckoned the Derry pitcher forward.

In the instant Captain Jack reached out for the ball and before he finished his protest, Earle's toe-cap seemed to catch in some way so that he stumbled and fell on his knees. He rose at once, lifted his foot and examined his shoe, and then as he started toward the plate gave a "hitch and kick" along the ground.

Last of all the players to join the group in front of the umpire, he advanced with perfect calmness. Such self-possession might mean either innocence or impudence. But Captain Jack, without waiting for explanations, held out the ball Earle had pitched.

That was no sphere. It was a discoloured oblong that had been knocked askew and had the "life" thumped out of it long ago. It was not even fit for a game of pass, and the minute the Millvale fellows saw it they knew why they had been unable to hit it out.

WHY THE MASCOT RESIGNED 113

"You hear what Captain Lorimer says, Earle?" snapped Don Walton, the Derry captain. "What about it? Where's that other ball?"

Earle grinned and shrugged his shoulders.

"He's having bad dreams," he answered. "There's no other ball on me. Look me over, if you want to." And he stripped down his sleeves, tore open his shirt, and slapped his limbs, turning slowly around before his companions.

For the moment it seemed as though Earle had cleared himself. But 'Rastus, the mascot, swiftly changed the course of events.

"I see dat yuther ball, Marse Don," he cried, as he faced Captain Walton, his big eyes shining with excitement. "Dat gemman, Mist' Earle, done drop it out he shirt when he stumble, out dar, an' when he git up he done kick it away. I dunno prezackly whar it land, but I promus I find it ef you wants it, Marse Don."

"Go on," Walton nodded. The negro dashed down the diamond. Earle bit his lip and clenched his hands. There was no grin on his face now.

"Have you any idea when this thing came into the game?" Walton asked.

"Possibly this or one just like it was thrown in to Earle at the start of the fourth inning, when the boy pretended to steal the ball that had passed your catcher," Captain Jack answered. "I know we've been pounding punk for three innings, anyway."

114 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

"Who threw that ball to Earle? Did you, Nickerson?" Walton demanded of one of the subs who had occupied the bench.

"Yeah."

"Coo-ee! Coo-ee!" It was a call from 'Rastus. Standing half-way between first base and the box he was pointing to something on the ground before him — the thing he had gone out to find.

"Yes," said Captain Jack, rather bitterly. "That's the ball that came into play when you fellows left the field. Quite a difference between this and the ball that was used when Millvale went to bat!"

"Anything to say, Earle?" Walton growled.

"Didn't you see this ball yourself? Hasn't the whole nine handled it? What are you putting all the blame on me for?"

"Last time I handled it, it hadn't been knocked out of shape this way," Walton answered. "I saw it wasn't a perfect ball, but I supposed Millvale was feeding it to us, just as we were to them, so it was as fair for one as it was for the other. Millvale was ahead, and I simply waited for the visitors or the umpire to kick, — that's all. But if you mean to insinuate that I had any part in your dirty game, you're a liar!"

"Earle, Crawford, Nickerson, get off the field!" he added, in the next breath. "You're a set of low-lived curs, and if it wasn't for the looks of the thing, I'd help kick you off!"

WHY THE MASCOT RESIGNED 115

The nine as a whole was with Walton, there was no doubt of that, and to risk a fuss with the husky lads who viewed them with such disgust and contempt was not in the plans of the plotters. They did not dare to make any talk, but Crawford, the catcher, snarled an oath as he slouched past the grinning 'Rastus.

"You black hound!" he hissed. "I'll pull your tongue out by the roots next time we come together."

Horace White happened to overhear. He had a grudge of his own, not against 'Rastus, but against Crawford, and he answered for the coloured boy.

"Feel like having trouble, do you, you big stuff?" he sneered. "Well, you just hang around till the game's over, and I'll give you a skinful!"

But Crawford only scowled and went off to join his two companions. Their "sure thing" scheme to win, at least to reduce the score, had failed disastrously, and, so far from receiving thanks from their own side, they were glad to get away with whole necks.

"I don't know what to say about this, Lorimer — how to make amends," Captain Walton began, as the three plotters turned a corner and went out of sight. "This ringing in a bad ball on your batters was a private enterprise of Earle and Crawford. It seems they found a sub, Nickerson, to help them; but the rest of us didn't

116 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

know anything about it, and we wouldn't have stood it for a minute."

Captain Jack glanced around the group. There was no doubt that Walton meant what he said, and the rest of the boys looked, as he did, ashamed and angry. Lorimer's face cleared and he laughed lightly.

"Forget it — let it rip!" he said. "We're all liable to get tangled up with these smart Alecks who are bound to win anyhow. I've had my share of 'em. We don't blame you. If you're able to fill the holes in your nine, we'll start again, just where we left off."

Walton brought up his change battery and called out two subs, and once more the umpire set things moving. With the score 3—0 in favour of Millvale, there were three innings to play.

The removal of Earle and Crawford seemed to make everybody feel livelier — with the exception of 'Rastus. He drifted over toward the Millvale bench, looking rather depressed, and even a good word from January didn't rouse him.

"Hi say, 'Rastus," the fat boy cried, "Hi'd like to shake 'ands with you. You did yourself proud, hold son!"

"Ah's gwanter design," the black boy answered, mournfully.

"'Ow's that?"

"Ah's not gwanter be de mascot no mo'! Ah's makin' up mah designation fo' Marse Don." And

WHY THE MASCOT RESIGNED 117

with a melancholy shake of the head, the black boy wandered away again, January staring after him, open-mouthed, and wondering what he was driving at, anyhow.

But the fat boy didn't waste much time in pondering that problem, for his own duty as mascot — as he understood it — required him to watch the play and keep his tongue going. So presently January waddled up to the diamond as near as he dared go, and began to make talk.

That was easy, for both nines were playing a snappy game, doing considerable hitting, but fielding just as smartly. It was the kind of ball a crowd likes to see, and, what with watching the players and listening to January, everybody was having a fine time. The pity of it, that 'Rastus should be dumb! He had served Millvale so well that the fat boy felt generous.

"Buck hup, hold sport!" he bellowed across the diamond. "Give us a hold-fashioned 'oller for Derry, and Hi'll back it up, blow me!" But 'Rastus sighed and shook his head.

Derry's new battery, Rice and Bowne, seemed fully as effective as the other, and since they did not put on the airs that Earle and Crawford had shown they got much better backing. For Millvale, Terry was holding out nobly, and the nine was showing better team-work than in any game before.

But, as it was a game worth watching, so also

118 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

was it one that made a fellow feel as though he wanted to break in. Bussey and Elverton, Tom Lorimer, Amos and Reed, there at the players' bench, shifted around uneasily, groaned sometimes, and wished they had January's license to get out and yell.

They tried to call 'Rastus over and set him talking, but he wouldn't come. Only when the game had ended, the score standing at the same old figures — Millvale 3, Derry 0 — did the black boy approach the players.

"Ah gotter design, Marse Don, suh!" 'Rastus said, solemnly, at the first chance he found to speak.

"Eh? What's that, boy?" Don Walton inquired.

"Ah gwanter give in my designation. Ah ain't gwanter be mascot no mo'."

"Going to put in your resignation, eh? Why, what's the trouble?"

"Kase mah luck am done bus' up, suh! Ef it hadn't a-been, Ah'd spotted dem free hoodoos — dat Earle an' Crawford an' Nickerson — 'fore evah dey come on de field, suh."

"Nonsense!" put in Captain Jack. "You did catch them at last, so —"

"Ef Ah wuz a sure-'nough mascot, suh, Ah'd catch 'em at fust! No, suh, Marse Don, Ah gwanter design, sure's yo' born!"

"Well, well, we'll talk about that later," Cap-

WHY THE MASCOT RESIGNED 119

tain Walton answered. "Going to help escort our friends to the car, aren't you?"

"Ah cert'ny am, suh, ef yo' say so."

Walton said so. Two by two the nines lined up, a Millvale boy arm in arm with a Derry lad. Then 'Rastus and January moved to the head of the little procession.

But they couldn't walk arm in arm, no matter how willing they might be. January couldn't reach up. 'Rastus couldn't get down. They stood off and looked at each other a minute, evidently wondering how to arrange it.

Finally the fat boy put up his hand and 'Rastus stretched to grasp it. Hand in hand, even though the hands were at arm's length, they turned to grin at their friends, and then strutted proudly away in the lead.

CHAPTER XIV

THE BUSY AND IMPORTANT SENIORS

OTHER things than sports were interesting the pupils of Millvale High, about this time. The end of the school year was only six weeks distant, and, by the cheerful reckoning of the younger boys and girls, the last two of those weeks "didn't count."

"The April examinations practically closed our year," explained Nora McGrady to her classmate, Jeff Bussey — who, having entered the second class when he came from the country village of Four Corners, in the previous autumn, was not so well informed as she in the ways of the school.

"The last of this month, or the first of next, we shall have a series of tests, mostly oral. They're just to keep us out of mischief. And the last fortnight, well, everybody's thinking and planning about graduation, the seniors have the floor, and all that the rest of us are expected to do is to go through the motions. I imagine it would be a great relief to our respected superiors, if they could

take us out and bury us. We're not so calm and sedate as the graduates, you know."

Yet the seniors did not feel so peaceful and sure of themselves as they looked. Out of school hours all the girls were bothering with dressmakers and milliners, and very likely every boy carried his personal anxieties. Terry McGrady, for instance, had charge of the athletic club's track events, which were to be pulled off on Decoration Day, in the following week, and, since this was the first time that the new club had figured as a host in this capacity, Terry felt his responsibility deeply.

An earlier event that concerned all the seniors was the meeting of the class. Principal Blaisdell would tell them who should give the Latin salutatory and English valedictory, and who were entitled to "parts," and they would choose the girls and fellows to figure in the graduation exercises.

What should they do with Rel Webb?

The first time some such question was put to him, Lorimer laughed and waved his hand. He thought it was a joke. But the next time — it was May Roxton who raised it, too — he looked and felt a little vexed.

"Why, give him a fair show, of course," he said.

"But it isn't so simple as that, Jack," May argued. "You know what Rel is. He may stick out for some particular part — the class prophecy, say — that will enable him to insult the principal

122 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

and half his classmates." But Lorimer refused to take this quite so seriously.

"Rel won't make a fool of himself in front of five or six hundred people," he said. "As I understand it, a girl always has the prophecy anyhow, so you can give it to one as a matter of course, and not rouse Rel's antagonism by letting him think you dreaded his having it. Then give Rel whatever belongs to him, — the salutatory, if Blaisdell says he's earned it, — and if you're perfectly square with him, he'll have pretty hard work to stir up a grievance."

"If you were only a senior, instead of a junior, Jack!" May murmured, wistfully.

"You think if there's a chance of a fuss I ought to be in it? How sweet and thoughtful of you! I must tell Terry about that. He'll say you're real Irish."

"Oh, you know what I mean. You'd be with us if you hadn't stayed out that year to help your father in his business — and you ought to be with us!"

"I have troubles of my own, child!" Captain Jack made answer, solemnly.

And yet, in spite of all the forebodings, that meeting of the senior class opened quietly enough. Tom Bell, as president, called the class to order, and introduced the principal, who could give the information which would govern much of their action.

"The leaders of the class," Mr. Blaisdell began, impressively, "are Miss Roxton and Mr. McGrady. By the custom of the school they are entitled, respectively, to the valedictory and the salutatory." And the applause that followed would have convinced anybody that these were two whom their classmates delighted to honour.

"Next to these leaders," the principal went on, "come eight pupils who have attained a rank of eighty-five or over — Misses Ahearn, Bell, Hawley, Gethro, and Miller, and Messrs. Bell, Webb, and Chapin. Though the sentiment of the school has always seemed opposed to the idea that scholarship alone established a right to graduation parts, it is clearly evident that these eight have, let us say, a claim to be considered."

Sitting by himself at one side of the room — for his only chum, Jim Fitzpatrick, had for some reason failed to attend the meeting — Rel Webb listened with a contemptuous sneer. He was one of the first ten, but he had only "a claim to be considered," and his enemies wouldn't let that count for much.

"As you know, the class has thirty-nine members," Mr. Blaisdell added. "It would hardly be possible for all to take an active share in the platform exercises, without prolonging them unduly. We always find, however, that there are some

124 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

seniors who are glad to be excused; and it has been the custom for those who so desire to signify it before the class proceeds to plan its programme.

"Of course, if the number of these modest ones is larger than it should be, the class persuades some to reconsider. If it is smaller — well, you will be severe, if necessary, remembering that those you put forward to represent you must be able to make a creditable showing. I shall be glad to see your programme, when it is drafted, and to consult with all who may wish advice about their parts."

The principal bowed and withdrew, and Tom Bell rose.

"I have placed in this first column on the blackboard the names of the ten honour pupils," he said. "In a second column we will put the names of those other pupils who would like to have graduation parts, and in the third column, the names of those who prefer to be excused."

"Those of you who wish to be excused, please write a word or two on a slip of paper. I will ask Mr. Harriott to collect the slips and copy the names in that third column."

Quietly and methodically Ned distributed a handful of slips. As quietly he collected those that were offered him, a moment later, and, going up to the blackboard, began his work. A murmur

of surprise swept over the room as, half-way down the list of those who wished to be excused, he wrote the name "Orello A. Webb."

Then Terry McGrady did a generous thing.

"Mr. President," he said, "not to speak of others, just now, I hope Webb will withdraw his name from that list. As an honour pupil, I, for one, feel that he has a right to a part, and we know that no member of the class makes a better appearance on the platform."

"May as well keep out as be pushed out, hadn't I?" was Rel's sneering rejoinder.

"Sure you don't want to bite off your nose to spite your face," Terry argued, in a good-tempered way, overlooking the insinuation that the class would not have done justice. "We could draft you, you know — assign you a part."

"Yes, and you can let me know my own business — and mind your own," Rel snarled; and Terry curled his lip and sat down again.

But it seemed a pity to everybody that a quarrel which had started outside of school should be dragged into graduation day; and after the class prophecy had been assigned to Rose Ahearn and the class song to Clare Bell, Tom called Matt Janvrin to the chair and went over where Rel sat sulking.

"Wish you'd let us put you down for an original oration, Webb," Tom said. "Of course we want our best writers and speakers to show, and you're

126 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

in both classes, so seems to me you ought to be willing to give us a lift."

"Forget it!" Rel growled. Tom looked at him a minute.

"See here," Tom said at length, "haven't you sense enough to realize that if a fellow like you sits back and does nothing, graduation day, his enemies will say, 'Oh, he's not popular, and he's no scholar, either, and all he could command was a chance to sit off in one corner.' How do you think your father'd like to have that notion get abroad?"

The words made Rel uncomfortable, as his face showed; but he did not answer.

"I'll tell you what we'll do," Tom Bell went on. "We'll elect you class marshal. That'll sort of take the curse off you — and if you get your brains back in the course of the next day or two, and conclude you'd like to be put down for an oration, you can tell me so."

"All right," Rel muttered, after a little hesitation. And thus it was arranged — somewhat to the surprise of persons who knew that Rel's relations with his classmates were distinctly "strained." Yet the view that Tom Bell and his friends took of the situation was sensible as well as generous.

"We can't afford to trot out any personal grudges on graduation day," Tom said, later. "That's the one time to forget everything like



"CAPTAIN JACK LORIMER . . . LIFTED HIS CAP REVERENTLY."

that, seems to me, and think of what'll make the best showing for the old school."

Captain Jack Lorimer faced toward the building, beautiful under the setting sun, and lifted his cap reverently.

"For the honour of Millvale High!" he said.

CHAPTER XV

HOW ROYAL BURR WENT HUNTING

SPEAKING of the Decoration Day games, it had been meant to make them an athletic club affair entirely; but that intention was altered when it was learned that there could be no league ball on the holiday. The Derry people planned to dedicate a soldiers' monument and did not want the solemn occasion broken in upon with sports; and the Winterton boys had lost their playing field, by a plot of the Stein gang, and might not at once be able to secure another; so, when they heard this, the Millvale fellows decided on an open meet and invited their friends in the four high schools to take part. That ensured a good attendance, anyway.

Though not because of the games, Lem Saunders had decided to spend his holiday in Millvale. He was not a "home boy," so that did not account, either, for his return from Boston, — yet he would have to stay at home pretty closely, for Rel Webb and Jim Fitzpatrick were the only friends he had in town, and half a dozen of the Lorimer crowd were pledged to whip him at sight.

HOW BURR WENT HUNTING 129

At the back of his mind there probably lurked a base intention, only half-acknowledged to himself, to do some mischief if he could. True, his last invasion of the gym had not been very successful. But through the gymnasium, he thought, he might somehow square his debt of ill-will, and toward it he walked, with Jim Fitzpatrick, late on the evening before the holiday.

Lem had chosen his companion wisely. Fitz feared and hated the athletes, the clean, straight fellows who held him in contempt. So he was heartily in sympathy with the curse that Saunders vented as the dark and silent bulk of the gymnasium rose all at once before them.

"I'd like to blow up that joint — with the gang in it!" Saunders growled.

"Same here," Fitzpatrick muttered.

Saunders stepped into the shadow of the building, where there was no danger of their being seen from the passing electrics.

"Anybody stay here at night, I wonder?" he said.

"Only the wildcat," chuckled Fitzpatrick.

"The wildcat, eh? Only the wildcat," Saunders repeated, thoughtfully. A great idea, as it seemed to him, had flashed into his mind. For a moment he stood and studied over it.

"Who opens the place mornings?" he asked, at length.

"A dozen or fifteen of 'em, as near as I can

130 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

make out," Fitz answered. "Lorimer and his special pets start out for a run, between five and six o'clock, and they come back here for a shower-bath before they go home to breakfast."

"What's the matter with giving the wildcat a chance to say good morning to 'em? Letting him loose, I mean. If a crowd came in together, he couldn't help nailing some of 'em."

Fitz didn't feel quite so sure of that. Somehow, luck generally seemed to favour the Lorimer crowd. But he did not argue, and Saunders took a bunch of keys from his pocket and started trying them in the door.

Somewhat to his own surprise, he found a key that fitted. And yet, if he had seen the situation as the club did, he would not have wondered that entrance was easy.

"There's no sense in trying to rig up elaborate fastenings," Captain Jack had said, a few weeks earlier. "This is a lonesome place, and anybody who wanted to break in could find plenty of chance to do it. But another fool like Costlow won't turn up in a hundred years, and our real protection is the good-will of most people, and the certainty on the part of the others that if they do damage we'll catch 'em and punish 'em, no matter what it costs."

But, for a possible emergency, there was a night-latch on the door that had yielded so readily. Though Saunders was not aware of that, he had

HOW BURR WENT HUNTING 131

somehow jarred it open; and as he suddenly reached out and drew Fitz into the gym, and as the automatic spring closed the door again, the catch set and locked them in.

Standing there in the darkness, the intruders listened a minute. Off at one side they could hear a rustling, and a smothered sound that seemed half a yawn and half a snarl.

"That must be the wildcat," Fitz muttered.

"We ought to have a light," Saunders said, in the same tone. "You know anything about these electrics?"

"Here's a switch, right by my hand," Fitzpatrick answered. Thoughtlessly he turned it.

Into the air went Saunders, and the wildcat gave one of his fiercest screams. Fitzpatrick was almost as startled as they. That sudden change from black darkness to a glare of light would have put a strain on nerves more steady than these two possessed.

"Shut that off, you fool!" gasped Saunders. "Suppose anybody should happen to be going by!" And as Fitz turned the switch once more, and the lights went off, he added:

"We'll have to use matches. All there is to do is to open the cage and then make a break."

"Say, I think I'd rather be making the break than opening the cage!"

That was not quite the way Lem had planned it. He had intended that Fitz should run the

182 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

risk, whatever it was. And yet, the more he thought of it, the less risk there seemed to be. It would take the wildcat a minute or two to realize his freedom, and before he was out of the cage they could both be outside the gym. Might as well get credit for being brave, Lem decided; and so he laughed at Fitz's attempt to back out.

"Oh, I'm game to open the cage," Saunders said. "All you'll have to do will be to stand here, ready to let us out. Get your hand on the knob, now, and when I sprint across the floor be ready to open and shut the door quick."

Probably Saunders had not realized that night was Royal Burr's wakeful time. It is certain that his heart almost failed him when, by the flickering light of a match, he got a glimpse of the wild-

cat. (Saunders is the farthest corner of his cage, his eyes blazing, the incarnation of strength and fury. He towers more than a tame one over the rest of the men. He knew that none could stand up to him in this hour, and he knew these things as he saw the wildcat's face. He knew that none could stand up to him in this hour, and he knew these things as he saw the wildcat's face. He knew that none could stand up to him in this hour, and he knew these things as he saw the wildcat's face.

HOW BURR WENT HUNTING 133

He nerved himself to strike another. As it blazed up, he put out a trembling hand and shot the bolt. But, in the instant he started away from the cage, Fitzpatrick called:

"Wait! Hold on! Don't let him out! I can't get this door open!"

"The cage is open!" Lem gasped. "Strike a match and see what the trouble is. I'll keep watch for him. Quick!"

"No, I won't strike a match, either, and show him where we are," Fitz answered; and there was no time to argue that an animal of the cat species could see them without any such help, for just then Lem caught the sound of feet padding stealthily over the floor, and he could have sworn he saw those gleaming eyes.

"Look out!" he whispered. "Be ready to dodge when he jumps!"

Fitz turned and took a backward step. His foot came in contact with something stiff-haired and yielding. With a yell of terror he ran.

It was only a brush, accidentally left outside, that he had stepped upon, but he thought it was something that lived and moved. Away from it he went, as hard as he could pelt, his hands outstretched to ward off other dangers.

Something slapped him across the face. He snatched at it desperately. A rope! Where it led to he didn't know — but up he went, hand over hand.

134 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

"Fitz! Fitz! Do you see it? Where are you?" That was Saunders.

"Er-r-row! P-f-f-st! P-f-f-st!" That was the wildcat.

And this time Lem was sure he could see the beast — and, as a matter of fact, he did. Royal Burr had stalked him around the sides of the gym, not straight across the floor, and now Royal was prepared to land on his back. It was Lem's luck, not his agility, that took him out of the way as the wildcat leaped.

"Come straight ahead across the floor," Fitz cried. "You'll find a rope hanging. Shin up."

Arms waving before him, that he might not miss it, Saunders started. He walked fast. That baffled snarl the wildcat gave when he landed on the boards instead of on a victim sent chills down his back, but put a fever in his blood. Anxiously he groped for the means of rescue. Ah! was that the rope? He twitched it hard.

"Go easy, you chump!" Fitz growled from somewhere overhead. "You mighty near flung me off, then!"

"Er-r-row! Er-r-row! Er-r-row!"

When Lem heard that — it sounded in his very ears — there was no stopping to consider, or even to look behind. Up the rope he went, like an accomplished acrobat, to where it ended in a narrow bar. He threw one leg over this, grasped a rope that ran up from the side, and drew a long breath.

HOW BURR WENT HUNTING 135

"Where are we?" he asked.

"Blessed if I know!"

Carefully Lem struck a match and turned the tiny flame back and forward. Down below them was the wildcat, crouched in an attitude of fierce watchfulness. All around was empty space. And they, already stiff and cramped from a moment's contact with that round and slippery bar, were perched at opposite ends of a trapeze hanging twenty feet above the floor.

CHAPTER XVI

DISCOVERED BY THE FAT BOY

IF Fitzpatrick had known it, Captain Jack and his "special pets" were not the only ones who used the gym in the early morning. January was in training, too.

On this morning of Decoration Day the fat boy alone took a run. Lorimer had called off his fellows, since he and most of them were entered in the afternoon events. But January, though he meant to take part in the potato race, had an idea that he needed the limbering, possibly thought it might melt off an ounce or two of flesh, and so set out at daylight and did his usual jog.

He and the milkman who brought Royal Burr's breakfast reached the gym together. Before the milkman got back to the road, January had discovered that the extra lock was set. Putting in his latch-key, he opened the door, and, with the can in his hand, stepped inside.

"What's the bloomink wildcat hup to, what?" said January.

The first glance had shown him Royal Burr, evidently just awakening from one of those re-

DISCOVERED BY FAT BOY 137

freshing naps a cat can take with one eye open, yawning his jaws to their utmost width and stretching his lithe and powerful body as if it had been a rubber band. And in the second glance the fat boy saw, away up on the trapeze, tied to it, in fact, two wretched objects that he did not at once identify.

Just at present January did not give them much thought. It was Royal he was thinking about — Royal, who had not quite made up his mind whether to be friendly or not, but faced him with a kind of puzzled stare.

“ ‘Ullo, hold sport!” January cried. “ You been hout hexercising, too? Been ‘aving a little game of tag, what? Hi bet you made them beauties ‘op!”

As the fat boy spoke, he was working the cover out of the can. Now he sprinkled a few drops of milk on the floor, for bait, and started toward the cage.

“ Come to breakfast, Royal,” he called, over his shoulder.

Probably January never questioned that the wildcat would obey him. But that sublime confidence would hardly have been shared by anybody else, and there was a moment when it seemed very doubtful whether Royal would go to breakfast or stay with the victims he had “ treed,” or start a fight.

He looked up at the trapeze and snarled. He

138 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

glanced after January and whined. He stood still a second, waving his stub of a tail and appearing to reflect. Then January began to slop the milk into his dish, whistling cheerfully as he always did at such times, and Royal glided across the floor toward that attractive sound.

"'Ere you hare, hold sport!" January said, half to himself. "You want to get busy with your breakfast, ye know, so as Hi can 'ave a look at what you caught."

Again for a moment, at the very door of his cage, Royal hesitated. Paying no attention to him, January went on whistling and pouring milk, and finally appetite triumphed. With an apologetic snarl, as if he were rather ashamed of himself, the wildcat stepped inside. Noiselessly January closed the door and dropped the catch.

"Heat 'earty, Royal!" the fat boy said, gaily. "This is a 'oliday, ye know, and Hi'll see as you 'ave steak for your dinner, blow me!"

Then he waddled over to the centre of the floor and gazed up at the trapeze.

"'Oo hare you two blokes?" he demanded. "Hi know you!" he chuckled, a minute later. "Ho yus! You're Fitzpatrick — and you're 'im as Hi locked in the closet, what?"

"Let us down," groaned Saunders.

"'Ow did you get hup, what?"

"The wildcat chased us."

DISCOVERED BY FAT BOY 139

" 'E did, did 'e? Hi suppose 'e met you down-town somewheres and brought you hup 'ere, and hopened the door to let you in, and then locked it hon you, what? "

Saunders made no reply.

" Say, January," Fitzpatrick pleaded, " we're stiff and cramped, and we'd have fallen off hours ago, if we hadn't tied ourselves on. Won't you be a good fellow and give us a lift? "

January laughed.

" Hi fancy Mr. Mains'll be 'ere directly," he answered. " 'E'll give you a lift — ho yus! "

" We're in pain — we're suffering," Saunders said, in lifeless tones.

" Hi don't care — not a 'ang! " was January's cheerful rejoinder. " Hi'm a-going to keep you hup there till you tell me 'oo punched 'oles hin our boat, blow me! "

Cautiously Fitzpatrick leaned toward Saunders and whispered to him, and with his free hand Lem began to unwind the rope by which they had secured themselves. Not realizing they planned an escape, January looked on for a minute. But the next minute he trotted into Mains's little office and out again, and Saunders, glancing down, found himself gazing into the muzzle of a revolver. At the shock of that discovery, he very nearly toppled over.

" Say, point it at him! " Saunders cried. " He's

140 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

the one — not me!" But the pitiless weapon never wavered, and Lem completely lost his head from terror.

"Say, turn that away and let me down, and I'll tell you all about it," he stammered, through chattering teeth. "He unscrewed the outrigger and bored holes in the shell — he said so — there's a screw-driver with his father's name on, behind the weather-boarding — he got scared away — didn't have a chance to get it again — please let me down!"

January grinned joyously. His only purpose in fetching out the revolver — which was not loaded — had been to keep the fellows where they were. By the merest chance the injury done to the shell had come into his mind, and he had demanded information which he did not really expect to get. Such luck was tremendous, overpowering. But there must be more to come; and as that thought occurred to him, he stepped one side and took aim at Fitzpatrick.

"Hi say, you, tell the truth yourself hif you want to come down!" he commanded, as Fitz in his turn tried to shrink out of range.

"Well, it's true," he muttered. "But Rel Webb got me to do it."

Grinning still, January carelessly swung the revolver, pointing it first at one and then at the other. With one consent, they spoke.

"Now let us down," they begged.

DISCOVERED BY FAT BOY 141

"You stay hup!" January ordered. "When Mr. Mains comes —

"'Ullo, Mr. Mains," he broke off, suddenly. "See what Royal Burr caught!"

Mains rested his hands on his hips and took a good, long look at the pair on the trapeze. His first impulse was to laugh, but they seemed so completely done up that a tender-hearted fellow like Mains couldn't but think of relieving them.

"Come down," he said. "No, hang on," he added — for he realized that they must be almost helpless. "I'll lower the trapeze.

"How did you find 'em, January?" he asked, as the trapeze touched the floor and the two vagabonds fell off.

"Hup there where you found 'em — with Royal Burr hunderneath, a-watchink 'em."

"They let out the wildcat, eh? Who put him back?"

"Why, Hi called 'im to 'is breakfast, and 'e came!"

Mains laughed, but he made no comment.

Slowly and painfully Saunders and Fitzpatrick got rid of some of the kinks the trapeze had put in their muscles. They were numb and sore and they ached in every joint, but the mental daze their suffering had caused was clearing away, and they realized that they ought to get out of their fix if they could. Saunders had the larger stock

142 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

of impudence, and he used it when he found he was able to stagger to his feet.

"Guess we'd better be going, Fitz," he muttered.

"Guess again," said Mains. "Get into that room over there. Don't try to leave it. Lorimer will see to you."

And yet, to the disappointment of January at least, the police were not called when Captain Jack arrived, and there was no bloodshed. Lorimer seemed to think that to have to roost on the trapeze five or six hours, with the wildcat underneath, was punishment enough.

"Of course, you understand that we've got you for breaking and entering, and you, Fitzpatrick, for malicious mischief," he said. "We're going to make you write and sign confessions, and then you can clear out, before the sight of you spoils our appetites."

Sidling up to Captain Jack, January nudged him.

"Hi say, Mr. Lorimer, sir, Hi wish you'd let me set Royal Burr hat 'em, to chase 'em 'ome!" he said.

The fat boy was serious, but the fellows who heard him had to smile.

"Guess we'd better save the wildcat to chase up an audience for our games," chuckled Jeff Bussey. "There's great doin's over at Rel Webb's grounds to-day. He's got 'em fenced in, now,

DISCOVERED BY FAT BOY 143

you know, and there's a sign out, ' Millvale vs. Rosedale of Boston — Two Games — Admission only 10 Cents! ' ”

“ Dirt cheap! ” said Lou Mains, slyly.

CHAPTER XVII

THE CLUB'S FIRST FIELD GAMES

JEFF had not named all the attractions. Besides two games of ball for a dime, Rel had provided a brass band! And yet it was to the grounds of the athletic club that the crowd came, — so numerous, in fact, that the track had to be roped off and patrolled.

Lou Mains was to act as starter and announcer. Harry Lee, an old friend of Bussey, had come up from Jeff's native town of Four Corners to serve as referee. The visiting clubs had named the judges, timekeepers, and scorers, and Terry McGrady, chief of the committee in charge, was as busy as a fellow could be who, while keeping track of a million details, had to remember that he was entered for the second event.

The first, a 100-yard dash, engaged three sprinters, Derry and Winterton sending no representatives. Ford came out for Millvale, Moran for Doverdale, and Marr for Roxbridge, and Moran won, — perhaps the best explanation of this being given in a talk between Ned Harriott and Will Chapin.

THE FIRST FIELD GAMES 145

"Too bad Ford got rattled and tried to beat the shot," said Will. "If he hadn't been set back a yard, he'd have romped in."

"Don't know about that," Ned answered. "Looks to me as though the best man won. Moran not only made a beautiful, clean start, he showed the prettiest stride I've seen in a long time. Funny thing, though, isn't it, that that Roxbridge captain should have such a bad style?"

"Marr's a fussy breather. That what you mean?"

"Gulps air like a fish out of water," Harriott nodded. "Roxbridge ought to be easy, if that's the method they all use."

"But, see here, speaking about fish," Harriott added, with a chuckle, "isn't that that skate Fitzpatrick, over there by the finish? Jove, that fellow has a nerve, to come around here to-day, after his experience with the wildcat last night."

But Fitz was forgotten when the five contestants lined up for the half-mile run, McGrady for Millvale, Parkhurst for Winterton, Wales for Roxbridge, Perks for Doverdale, and Walton for Derry. These were all good men, and though only defeat would persuade Terry's friends that he was not the best, there promised to be a warm "argument" coming.

The five got away pretty well bunched. It was Walton who first drew ahead a little, and then

146 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

Wales began to creep up on him, with the other three keeping the same relative distance behind.

"Looks to me as though that Derry man's forgetting that a half-mile has two quarters," Harriott told Chapin.

"Bet you he shows more endurance than the Roxbridge fellow, though," Chapin answered. "Wales's stride looks as if he was trying to straddle a brook. I don't know any surer way to waste strength than that. Jolts a runner all to pieces — and I know, you know, for I ran that way until Lorimer broke me of it."

Now the runners were almost at the turn, with Parkhurst even with Wales, and Perks and McGrady only inches behind. Walton still led, but there was not the spring in his motion that there had been a few seconds before.

Past the turn, and Terry lengthened out a little and got into the near neighbourhood of the leader.

"Up you come, Terry!" roared Oscar Stacy. "Right this way, where we're a-waiting!"

It would be absurd to suppose that caused it, for in a race a man hears nothing after the starter's pistol, but this was Terry's time to spurt and he swept past Walton as if the Derry man had been tied.

Now the Millvale favourite was calling on that strength which he had not squandered at the beginning, running easily and smoothly, and yet

THE FIRST FIELD GAMES 147

with a speed that brought discouragement to the friends of some of his competitors.

Yet Perks was going strongly, too, and Parkhurst of Winterton, though his style was not so good, was showing splendid endurance. No great distance separated the three. Parkhurst, the last man, might have stretched out a cane or umbrella and touched McGrady, the first one.

"McGrady wins!" "Hit her up, Parkhurst, you're gaining!" "Come along, Perks, you've got 'em!" "Keep 'em following you, Terry!" Such were the diverse cries that rent the air, and at the last furlong the race was still doubtful enough to warrant them all.

But then, with one bound forward, Terry placed himself definitely in the lead. Could he hold it? Ay, and increase it. Strain as they might, the others could not reach him, and at the finish Perks, the second man, was more than a yard behind.

"Good old Terry! Knew he could do it!" chuckled Harriott.

"Good old Tom! Here's another one that's going to do it," said Chapin, as Mains cried "Vaulters all out!" and Tom Bell, with Catherwood of Roxbridge and Howe of Doverdale, came to the front.

It was rather a disappointment to everybody, Tom above all, that this class showed so few contestants. Originally, when the sports were planned

148 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

for Millvale alone, Captain Jack and Horace White had agreed to enter for the pole vault, not with any idea of defeating Tom, but simply to make things interesting.

When the other four towns promised to put forward their best, Lorimer and White dropped out; but then two towns failed to provide champions, and the best way the fellows could think of to lengthen out the contest and make it "mean something," was to give each competitor three trials and a chance to beat the other fellows' record.

Howe was to lead off, and he set them an easy one, calling for the bar to be fixed at ten feet, eight inches, and going over it cleanly and gracefully. Catherwood tried another feeler, raising the distance two inches, and doing the vault as if it was an every-day affair. And, wearing a quiet smile, Tom Bell jumped the bar another two inches, to eleven feet, and took it handily.

There were no two-inch raises during the second round. One inch seemed to be enough. Howe called for eleven feet, one inch, Catherwood for eleven feet, two inches, and Tom negotiated eleven feet, three inches. But when it came to the third round it began to look as though some of the fellows were getting near their limit.

Howe's face wore a worried expression as he ordered the bar to be set at eleven feet, three and a half, and, though he cleared it, he evidently

THE FIRST FIELD GAMES 149

didn't want to try any higher. Catherwood made an attempt at eleven feet, four inches, but caught his foot and barely "lummoxed" over.

"Eleven-six," said Tom, quietly.

"Well, maybe he can," Ned muttered.

But there was no "maybe" about it in Tom's mind. His training had begun long ago, and, though he was not the kind of fellow to announce results beforehand, he knew pretty well what he could do. He made an easy sprint, rose with no show of effort, and turned and came down as lightly as an acrobat.

Howe and Catherwood had the option to try to beat that, but they refused to avail themselves of it. Tom was clearly their superior.

Somewhat the same conditions as in the pole vault attended the running high jump, though here Roxbridge had put forward two men, Russell and Kerrison, while Doverdale and Winterton entered only one each, Merchant and Sullivan, and Derry had none. But Phil Kavanagh represented Millvale, and Phil could jump all day, and would just as soon have had a big field to defeat.

Since there weren't many, and since he wanted to get along to more interesting trials, he ended the agony quickly. Once around the fellows went, feeling out each other's capacity. Then Phil ordered the bar set six inches higher than the rest of them had reached.

He cleared it with ease; but he was the only one

150 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

of the five who could do so. To show that it was no accident, he went over a second time. And amidst great applause that part of the exhibition ended.

“Potato race — January Jones of Millvale and Bob Johnson, alias 'Rastus, of Derry,” called Mains. Hand in hand, though they looked as if they would rather bite each other than play at being friends, the two mascots came on the field.

Two rows of eight potatoes, each potato two yards from the next, confronted the fat boy and the darky as, standing at an equal distance from the basket in which the potatoes were to be placed, they awaited the word.

One by one the potatoes must be picked up, beginning with the nearest, and put into the basket. Admitting that both contestants finished at the same instant, the winner would be that one who first reached a point five yards behind the basket.

When one boy was excessively stout and the other absurdly thin, it promised to be a pretty even race. Where one would lack speed, the other would probably lack endurance. It was safe to be an amusing race, anyhow, and already the competitors had caught the eyes of the crowd and were getting jocular advice enough to load a ship.

“Are you ready?” asked Mains, himself on the

THE FIRST FIELD GAMES 151

broad grin. And January hitched up his knickerbockers and nodded, while 'Rastus answered:

"Yassuh. I is, sho'!"

"Go!" 'Rastus went off like a bullet from a gun, while January lumbered into an ungainly trot. 'Rastus had dropped a potato and was half-way to the second, before the fat boy deposited one in the basket.

But January had realized that it would take time to get around, and he had seen how to save time. It was from the two-yard mark where he found it that he basketed the first potato, simply halting a second to take aim, and then pitching it across the intervening distance. And when he took up the potato at the four-yard line he brought it back to the two-yard line only, and pitched it from there.

'Rastus had not practised that trick, as January had, and when he tried it he threw the potato wide and had to go and pick it up and drop it in, and there the fat boy made a gain.

Strange as it seems, 'Rastus was not so sure-footed as January, either. At the fifth potato he overbalanced in stooping and sprawled all over the field, and the fat boy, who was just waddling along and making no false motions, caught up the time his opponent lost.

At the seventh potato it looked as if January might be an inch or two ahead. Perspiration was pouring from him in streams, but he was attending

152 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

strictly to business. And 'Rastus was getting rattled, and had to reach two or three times before he grasped his potato.

At the eighth potato 'Rastus fumbled again. January seized his and started for the basket and the finish line.

"Pick up your feet, January!" "Get a move on, 'Rastus!" A thousand throats were sounding encouragement, intermixed with roars of laughter, as the fat boy, his broad face red as flame, came down the home stretch.

No stopping to pitch the potato now, for this time he would lose by it. Swerving toward the basket as he ran, he dropped it in. As January's reached the basket, 'Rastus's last potato left his hand.

But ah! 'Rastus's aim was bad. The potato missed the basket, and he had to stop and pick it up. He handled it swiftly this time, and made a gallant effort to retrieve his loss. But the fat boy breasted the line nearly a yard in advance.

CHAPTER XVIII

A RUN THAT WAS NOT SCHEDULED

It involves no reflection on the events that were to follow to say that, when the potato race ended and January retired, about half the spectators went also.

A raw east wind was blowing up, and people who lacked educated interest in athletics, so to speak, began to realize that they were uncomfortable. From the standpoint of the enthusiasts, perhaps it was as well they went, for, though Oscar Stacy won the hammer throw for Millvale, Doverdale captured the relay race and Roxbridge took the 220-yard hurdles.

But, to those who remained, the last event, the mile run, was, as Ryerson Legate called it, the blue-ribboner.

Than this distance, there is no surer test of an athlete. It is long enough to demand staying power, short enough to call for speed. To win in an ordinary field a runner must be physically perfect, trained in a good method, and possessed of nerve and judgment. But this was rather better

154 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

than ordinary, perhaps, and one at least of Captain Jack's competitors would try him hard.

Lorimer for Millvale, Leighton for Doverdale, Trask for Roxbridge, Parkhurst, once more, for Winterton; these were the entries. Trask seemed anxious to set the pace, and everybody but Parkhurst was willing he should. The Winterton fellow sprinted viciously and soon overhauled him, and they went on neck and neck, with the other two a step in the rear.

Yet this is not to say that anybody dawdled. A good miler generally finds it advisable to run his first quarter fast. That is the time when it is easiest to get up speed, provided he has any; and these four fellows had a plenty, though an expert might have suspected that Trask and Parkhurst were overdoing the thing a little.

"It's amazing how a fellow so stiff-gaited as Parkhurst can hit her up the way he does," muttered Ned Harriott.

"Trask gets good action, anyway," Chapin answered, in the same tone. "What a difference there is between his style and Rob Marr's!"

Into the second quarter flashed the four contestants, still making speed and now pretty well bunched. There was no indication that either of the four was finding the pace too swift for him, Parkhurst, the faultiest of the lot for action, being still "as fresh as paint."

A RUN NOT SCHEDULED 155

"It'll be a race up to the last second, with four in it," Chapin cried.

"Right! And yet I don't know. The last quarter'll tell. We know Jack and Ted can sprint, but these other two —"

The other two were doing very well, so far. The third quarter was run in slower time, of course, but they did not seem to lose any ground, relatively. And as the quartet ticked off the yards and drew toward the last quarter, it would still have looked to a stranger like anybody's race.

The last quarter! Time to "get a move on!" Time for Captain Jack to change his gait and gain speed by bringing into use a new set of muscles!

Probably the reader has noticed that the best quarter-milers strike a different gait from that used by distance runners. They run farther up on the toes and bring the hip muscles more into play. Obviously if a miler can at the three-quarter pole get up on his toes and set his hips working, he will be using fresh muscles and making speed.

Into the new gait Lorimer swung, and as he settled into it he forged to the front.

Parkhurst was dead by this time, running on his nerve and endurance, and Trask was pretty near it. Ted Leighton was in fine shape yet, but Lorimer's tactics were pulling Captain Jack forward, ahead of him.

Yet Ted could spurt, too, and on that last

156 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

quarter he did so. He was a strong second, less than a yard behind, as they swept down toward the finish.

The last ten yards! And then, when the line seemed almost within reach, somebody darted from one side of the course to the other. To dodge the rash intruder was impossible. Captain Jack caromed into him and flung him hard.

Lorimer fell, too, but that cushion of a body protected him, and in a moment he arose, a little dazed, but unhurt. Yet that delay had been fatal. Ted Leighton had won the race.

Somebody stepped out and offered Captain Jack a blanket. He put it over his shoulders and stooped down to the fellow who had been thrown.

Why, it was Fitzpatrick! And it looked as if he was pretty badly hurt, too. His eyes were closed, his face as white as death, and blood was oozing from his nose and ears.

"Hunt up a doctor to see him, will you, Lou?" said Lorimer to Mains. "Good boy, Ted!" he cried to Leighton, and started for the dressing-room, by way of the "short cut" under the grand stand.

But just as he reached the entrance he caught a fragment of excited conversation:

"Webb's grand stand is on fire. Started underneath. People caught in it, they say!"

Just a minute Jack waited to pull on trousers

and a sweater, and then, calling Terry on the way, set out on a run to Rel Webb's grounds.

"We may be able to help, somehow," he said. "When a fellow's in trouble, it's time to forget he's your enemy."

But there proved to be nothing to be done at Webb's. The grand stand was tottering to its fall as the flames died down for want of fuel. Nobody had been endangered by the fire. Rumour had exaggerated, as it generally does.

And not only had they taken a hard run for nothing; they were insulted "for thanks." Ragged, begrimed, every way upset, Rel came up to the fellows as they stood and watched, and opened upon Captain Jack.

"Thought you'd come over and gain some glory doing a life-saving act?" he sneered.

Jack made no answer.

"Perhaps you wanted to explain to us, on the spot, how the fire started?" Rel pursued.

Still Captain Jack said nothing. But Rel was lashing himself into fury, and needed little encouragement to talk.

"Well, I'll tell you, though you probably know, that the fire was set," he hissed. "We'll find out who set it, and if it proves to be one of your pups, as I suspect, we'll make him sick of his life."

Lorimer laughed contemptuously, and turned away. But Terry had a word he was bound to contribute.

158 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

"Sure, if he owns any property, you might set Fitzpatrick to punch a few holes in it," Terry suggested.

Rel understood that allusion very well, and his angry face changed colour a little.

"Don't you butt in, McGrady!" he cried. "I haven't any quarrel with you, but this —"

"Shut up, you fool!" sounded decisively in another voice. Tom Bell had quietly joined the group, and evidently he meant to end the talk.

"Go and wash your face and take a dose of catnip for your nerves," he added. "Lorimer has never worked against you, except as he had to protect himself. It was his influence more than any other that ensured you a show in the graduation exercises. Why, you low-down whelp!" Tom roared, getting rather warm himself, "about the time you were scheming to break up our boat-race, he was arguing with us to lift the boycott and give you another chance."

"And a fool he was for it!" Terry interjected.

"Now, I'll tell you one more thing," Tom went on. "Probably you'll find this fire started from some friend of yours sleeping off a drunk on the premises. There's one thing sure, none of our crowd knows anything about it. You know that as well as we do. But you mention Jack's name, or any other, in this connection, and I'll push you for slander on my own responsibility!"

"Come on, boys," he added, with one last

glance of deep disgust. "I want to forget that this galoot exists!

"Funny break, that of Fitzpatrick's," he said, a few minutes later, when they were clear of the crowd and on the way back to the gym. "He must have counted on crippling you, Jack, when he ran across there, but he should have had sense enough to know that in such a collision the one who is going slowly is the one who gets hurt. Seems to have knocked him out, all right. Doctor says it's concussion of the brain, and there's no telling, for twenty-four hours, how badly he's hurt."

"I'm sorry," Jack answered.

"Not me!" said Terry and Tom, in a breath.

"Oh, Fitz has his good points. If we could get hold of him and hang on to him —"

"There's nothing to hold on to," Tom broke in, decisively. "Let him rip.

"Saunders was the one who showed wit," he added. "He got out of town this morning."

CHAPTER XIX

PRINCIPAL HORTON AND HIS NEPHEW

It proved that Fitzpatrick's brain was not affected — "for because 'e didn't 'ave any, ye know," said January Jones — and soon he was busy, under Rel's orders, in trying to trace the person who fired Webb's grand stand. Misfortune followed.

Persisting in the crazy notion that the Lorimer crowd knew something about the fire, Rel went to Martha, Blodgett's housekeeper, to ask if January or Jeff had confided in her; but he was impudent, and Martha turned the hose on him. Then Fitz dressed up as a policeman, and he and Rel called on Archie Smith and tried to frighten him into a confession. But Archie, being suspicious, sent out on his own account for a policeman — Carl Halvorsen, "the Swedish giant," a warm friend of the boys — and Halvorsen exposed Fitz's fraud and arrested both the tricksters, and it took all the influence old Webb could command to keep them out of court.

And a few days later, the whole structure of Rel's charges collapsed, when a travelling man,

returning to Millvale from a business trip, told about seeing McShane, one of Rel's imported "amateurs," staggering out from under the grand stand on the day it was destroyed.

"Fire! fire! fire!" McShane was roaring. "Somebody get the engines and put Webb out!" And, since the fellow was drunk and out of the game, that day, people who could put two and two together soon concluded that McShane had gone under the grand stand to "sleep it off," and had started the blaze with a pipe or cigar.

That didn't keep Rel from still insinuating that his rivals were responsible for the fire. But nobody paid much attention, his schoolmates least of all. With graduation fast approaching, they were too busy.

Sports languished and the league games were set ahead. For a fortnight there was not much doing, aside from school interests. That may have been a reason why one occurrence of the time attracted more attention than it otherwise would.

To Tom Bell, who was interested in stamps and had a fine collection, there came a letter from Marion Woodside, a girl in Roxbridge, enclosing some stamps that, in a way, were common. That is, they were all familiar varieties, the odd thing being that they were blue in colour instead of green, — a circumstance which, if they were genuine, made them valuable.

There was not much fun, for an athlete, in

162 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

visiting the Roxbridge High School, for the principal, Mr. Horton, was bitterly opposed to athletics, kept Rob Marr's fellows in hot water all the time, and never hesitated to say unpleasant things to a stranger. Tom would have made the trip, nevertheless, to look for light on the origin of the stamps, but illness at home restrained him, and it was January whom he finally sent with a sort of "roving commission."

The fat boy reached the Roxbridge building at intermission and boldly invaded the yard. Rob Marr was not in sight. But though the fat boy did not locate his friend, he at once detected a possible enemy, — a greasy, slouchy, unwholesome-looking lad who was tagging a group of girls and who grinned at January as if he found him very amusing.

"Oo are you a-gawping hat, what?" January demanded.

The other fellow, who might have been seventeen or eighteen years old, looked again, chuckled once more, and muttered some remark to one of the girls. Miss Woodside was crossing the yard to meet him, but January doubled his fist and took a step forward.

"Put a name to it and tell me where you'll 'ave it, you bloomink Cheshire cat!" the fat boy cried. "Hi'll black your heyes or Hi'll bust your nose or —"

But here Miss Woodside interrupted in the

most effective way — taking no notice of January's hostile attitude, but offering her hand with a smile no boy could resist.

"I'm awfully glad to see you, January," she cried. "Do you know my friend, Mr. Pratt?" She indicated the boy whom January had just threatened. "Mr. Pratt is the gentleman who found those odd stamps I sent Mr. Bell. Charlie," she added, "this is January Jones, who is very popular with our athletes, and —"

But at that moment, to his great relief, January was rescued and carried off by Catherwood, one of those same athletes. Catherwood only laughed when January asked what kind of fellow Pratt was, and January did not pursue the subject. But at the second game of baseball between Millvale and Roxbridge, one incident of this and an earlier day had a sequel which interested the fat boy, even though he cut no figure.

It was "the kind of baseball the squirrels play in the bushes," as Terry McGrady said. Millvale won by fourteen to eleven, which was nothing to be proud of, and Captain Jack, feeling rather disgusted, was leaving the diamond, when he met Marion Woodside. He lifted his cap and passed.

"Oh, Mr. Lorimer —"

There was an unusual note in the girl's voice. Turning quickly, Lorimer saw there were tears in her eyes. He came back to her.

164 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

"Anything I can do, Miss Woodside?" he asked.

Evidently she found it hard to answer. A minute passed before she spoke, and then the words were confused and tremulous.

"Mr. Bell," she said, "I wanted to see Mr. Bell — but I'm ashamed! I sent him some stamps, you know. I thought they were odd, uncommon ones. And — and —"

"Yes?" Lorimer hinted, encouragingly.

"Well, it turns out they were forgeries!" she exclaimed. "Charlie Pratt, the boy I got them from, sold a lot of them in school, and last night the fellows got suspicious and took him over to the pond and threatened to duck him, and he confessed he'd taken green stamps and soaked them in diluted hydrochloric acid, and — and that was how they came to be blue! Of course, Mr. Bell might think I knew they were frauds, and I —"

"Oh, nonsense, Tom isn't small enough to think anything of the sort!" Lorimer interrupted. "Here, give him a chance to tell you so!" he added, as he signalled to Bell.

The explanation must have been satisfactory to both, judging from a remark made by May Roxton when, a few days later, Marion came to Millvale as her guest and accompanied her to the tennis-court.

"There's another friend who wants to meet

you," May said, as Tom Bell approached. " He thought it was fine of you to feel as you did about the stamps. When you know Tom better, though, you'll realize that you needn't have worried. He wouldn't suspect you of doing anything deceitful. Why, Tom never had an ungenerous thought in his life! "

" I begin to believe that the Millvale boys and girls never do have that kind! " Marion answered.

CHAPTER XX

THE GENEROUS STRANGERS — AND OTHERS

PERHAPS there was something in the Millvale atmosphere that prompted generous thoughts in strangers, too. About this time January Jones's brother, James Henry, arrived from British Columbia on his way to the Old Country, and a friend of Seth Lanard's boyhood, Joe Danvers, happened along from Wisconsin, and, as Jeff Bussey said, the things they did were a plenty.

James Henry Jones, for years a penniless prospector, had just "struck it rich" and wanted to "divide" with those who had been kind to January. And Joe Danvers had been a Millvale boy himself, and the fact that Mr. Lanard was interested in the athletes was enough to interest him.

The visitors were elected honorary members of the athletic club. In fact, they asked to be. Then without warning they began to spend money.

Jones set up a flagstaff on the grounds and bought a splendid silk flag and a name-pennant. Danvers noticed the one four-oared shell in the

boat-house, and the first thing the fellows knew, two were there, with four extra singles. And Seth Lanard thought hard for an hour or so, and then went to Boston, and hustled ten pieces of apparatus into the gym.

Then Captain Jack interfered.

"You mustn't do it," he said to Jones and Danvers. "Mr. Lanard and others have baby-tended us too much already. It's better for a crowd to earn things for themselves and not get into the habit of lying down on other people."

Lorimer had spoken just in time. Pretty soon the strangers might have been silver-plating the gym and hiring jewelers to stick diamonds all over the apparatus.

But if the Millvale atmosphere prompted them to be generous, it didn't seem to have any such effect on the Webbs. Much to the contrary was the story Chap Stanley told Lou Mains.

"All busted up and gone to smash!" said Stanley, dismally. "That's right, Mains! We're on our u-p-uppers, and I guess as far as the Webbs are concerned we're likely to stay there. We can chew grass till the farmers make their hay, you know, and by-me-by we can eat snowballs! What? Well, that's about the way the Webbs line it out to us!"

This was the second call Mains had received from Rel Webb's star pitcher. The first had been abruptly closed by Lou turning him out of the gym.

168 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

But at that time Stanley was loud and impudent, and thought he was on the top wave,—while now he was underneath, and knew it. Webb had used the burning of the grand stand as a pretext to disband his “Millvale Club,” and the imported players suddenly found themselves out of work and without a salary. Mains was not one to kick a man who was down, and when Stanley stuck his head into the gym and asked in about so many words if he might tell his troubles, Lou invited him in and gave him a chair.

“How about that contract with the grocer who pretended to employ you, so you could pose as an amateur?” Mains asked. “Can’t you hold him to it?”

Stanley shook his head in a shamefaced way.

“Got bilked on that,” he answered. “They took it from me, so they could make a change, in my interest; see? And the contract didn’t come back to me; see? When I talk about it they give me the ha-ha.”

“Small potatoes!” growled Mains. He had not imagined that an established business man or a man of Webb’s professional calibre would be guilty of such petty trickery. But Mains, being honest himself, had much to learn.

“Mind you,” Stanley added, a little more hopefully, “I don’t think that contract is N. G., all to the bad, if I did lose the paper. A number of

people saw it, and Webb played just about the same game on three more of the boys, so if we find there's nothing doing any other way, we'll get together, by-me-by, and drill him for a few dollars apiece to take us out of town."

So much for the generosity of the Webbs in money matters. In another direction they showed a similar spirit, on graduation day.

That day was bright and beautiful as June could be. The friends of Millvale High came out in force, and, as one of the juniors who acted as ushers, Captain Jack spent a busy half-hour. Yet "old Joe Danvers" and Seth Lanard, the school's benefactor, snuggled away in back seats, in spite of his efforts to get them up front; while Rel Webb's father, who was all the time using the school to carry out his own schemes, strutted into one of the most conspicuous places.

But after Marshal Rel Webb led in the class — nineteen couples, twenty-four girls and fourteen boys besides himself — some time elapsed before anybody thought of the Webb family. Following a selection by the orchestra, Terry McGrady gave the Latin salutatory, and his presence was so attractive and his voice so melodious that he cast a spell from which the audience would not soon escape.

One by one, the reader's friends among the seniors came forward, to be received and dismissed with applause. Tom Bell and Phil Kavanagh,

170 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

Will Chapin and Ned Harriott, all covered themselves with glory. And if any hearers found their orations too "solid" and thoughtful, there was entertainment for everybody in Rose Ahearn's class prophecy, which was as witty as it was good-natured.

Bell and Webb and McGrady were lawyers, as Rose read the future — though she did not say they would be partners. Will Chapin was a Congressman, Ned Harriott a merchant, Phil Kavanagh an inventor. They still kept in training, and Chapin was the captain of the Congressional Nine, while at the age of sixty-three Bell had made a new record for the pole vault, fifteen feet, eight inches!

Clare Bell had just been elected the first woman mayor of Millvale, at the time Rose pretended to be picturing. May Roxton had thrown away the chance to become a prima donna, that she might return to Millvale as the wife of a "humble electrician." The prophetess herself was earning her living by keeping a candy shop, and, for diversion, tutoring students in physics — a statement that greatly amused her teachers and classmates, who recalled the terrific struggles Rose had had with this uncongenial study.

Millvale High was housed in a new building that cost twelve hundred thousand dollars, at the period Rose foresaw. There were eleven hundred pupils, and the principal was "a short, stout man

ROSE JONES — At this moment, speaking
while James Jones was at home.

But her new scheme was not to be
of course, her proper, her very own, her
of the programme, as her old and "happy"
in, Prince George. But now at last she
had written it a beautiful thing of the man,
"strong, scholarly, wise and true," who for forty
years was the honored principal of Milford
High. That new building was called the "Blais
del Memorial High School," she said, and it had
been built and presented to the city by grateful
graduates.

Rose's prophecy was the triumph of the day,
and Terry flashed across the platform a glance
and smile that told her how proud of her he was.

Then it was Rel Webb's turn, and standing before
front he announced his subject, "The Future
of Democracy."

It sounded innocent enough. The speaker had
been so when the principal saw it, and it was
rather windy comparison of modern and ancient
republics. But of course it was not to be
Rel to alter his manuscript and to be the first
to make a change in his and after a few
minutes of long sentences full of the same
began to inflate his chest back to the point
from his text.

"These are encouraging facts," he
claimed. "But we cannot let them be."

172 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

has truly triumphed, until in narrower but nearer fields, society, business, the school, the home, we have ended the reign of the boss.

"When a person of no social standing and no reputation for scholarship dominates a school — this, for instance — its athletics, its social relations, even the doings in its class-rooms; when by brute force he rules the younger, by cajolery bends the older to his will, and by terrorism tries to cow those who would be independent; when a weak-kneed principal cringes before him and is rewarded with money to pay his debts, and when teachers yield to him because they fear his influence may displace them — we have a baneful condition that should receive the attention of every good citizen!"

"Does the fool mean us — me?" wondered Captain Jack. People seemed to think so. But Lorimer's conscience was clear; and the faces of the audience told that they were not so much shocked at his alleged crimes and Blaisdell's weakness as they were by the atrocious taste displayed in Rel's attack.

"But in the time to come," Rel concluded, "we shall change all this. With an incorruptible principal to sustain the protests of those who wish to be free, there will grow up sound scholarship, successful athletics, and social relations free from clique management. Then democracy will triumph in our little world, as in the larger, and the

GENEROUS STRANGERS 173

name of the boss, whether boy or man, will be remembered with nothing but loathing!"

With an impressive gesture, Rel bowed and stepped backward. His hearers hardly seemed to know what to do.

Rel's father was clapping his hands furiously. Nobody joined him at first; but people are imitative, and probably if he kept it up long enough he would start some applause for Rel's vulgar exhibition.

Up jumped Seth Lanard, at the instant when a few weak-minded folks looked like following Webb's lead. Everybody knew him. Everybody watched him. Just a second he waited. Then he sent out a long hiss, fierce and loud as a challenge to battle.

That broke the tension. It was laughter instead of applause that came from the audience. Old Webb dropped his hands, knowing that no one would join him. The regular programme went on.

It would take too long to tell how the afternoon passed. Enough to say that this was the only unpleasant incident. There were other orations, essays, and musical selections; Mr. Arkwright, for the school committee, gave out the diplomas, adding a few wise words, and the class song, with words and music by Clare Bell, was sung.

Now came the valedictory by May Roxton. Never had she looked sweeter than she did to-day, when she seemed to unite the grace of girlhood

174 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

with the poise and self-command of maturity. And yet it was no feeble and spiritless thing, this charm of hers. Like a good girl and a true woman, she could flash into indignation over anything base and low — and she did.

It was just a sentence that she flung into her valedictory, but it went straight as a bullet and left the Webbs staggered and helpless.

“To you, sir,” she said to Blaisdell, “who have the respect and good-will of all your pupils who are themselves respectable; to our schoolmates and successors who will sustain and continue the open, honest, harmonious methods that have won the approval of all but cowardly intriguers and treacherous assassins — ”

This with her blue eyes fairly blazing. And everybody knew who May meant, and, when she concluded, there was no room for doubt where the sympathy of the audience rested.

The valedictory was the end of things, in an official sense. Led by Marshal Rel Webb, as before, the seniors marched back to the classroom in which they had assembled. Ordinarily they would have taken their hats and wraps and started for home at once. But now they found a caterer's man hovering around attractive tables, and “old Joe Danvers” standing at the door to welcome and detain them.

“I have permission to invite you to a little luncheon — just cake and ice-cream and such

stuff," he said. "There won't be any speeches, or any kind of foolishness, and I'll appreciate it if you'll be my guests for five minutes."

But a minute later he beckoned Rel Webb one side, and gave Rel his share of the refreshments in this fashion:

"That doesn't mean you!" he said. "I've taken pot-luck with bad whites, renegade Indians, and about everything else that travels on two legs, but I draw the line at pups of your kind! Git, now, before I boot you!" And Rel got.

CHAPTER XXI

SOMETHING TO WAKE THEM UP

"ER-R-RAW! Er-r-raw!" the wildcat snarled — not angrily, but as if he thought he had reason to complain; and he stood up, turned round end for end, and lay down again, with his eyes on January.

"Did the bloomink 'ullabaloo spoil 'is nap, what?" January asked. "Well, hold sport, school's hout, and that's 'ow! School's done in Derry, too, you know, and it's the Derry gang hout there that's making 'alf the noise.

"Ho-ho-hum!" he yawned. "Hi'd like to go to sleep meself, blow me! You and me'll 'ave to do somethink to wake us hup, what? Hi've 'alf a mind to take you hout on the field now, and make the nigger 'oller!"

There was little or no work for January, now that school had closed, and, since the fellows had hardly "struck their gait," in the way of sports — for many of them were away on vacation trips — he felt distinctly bored. James Henry also had gone, and, though he had been in Millvale less than a week, his departure left the fat boy lonely

as well as dull. He was "fit for treasons, stratagems, and spoils," and there was a minute when he seriously thought of stirring up things with Royal Burr, at 'Rastus's expense.

But on second thought January gave Royal Burr a handful of catnip and went out alone to the diamond — where "the nigger," 'Rastus, was busy in talk with Mr. Danvers.

"Ah don' know nuffin', suh, 'cept how to cook an' wait on table an' take care ob a gemman's clothes," 'Rastus was saying. "Ah don' know how to milk or plough or tend sto' or drive a hoss or play a playano or row a boat — nuffin' but —"

"By George, if you know how to cook you know enough for one boy!" Danvers interrupted, in his loud and hearty voice.

"Yassuh, Ah certny does — house cookin' or camp cookin' — 'case my mother was a cook and my father was a butler, an' Ah done had it lammed inter me! But dere's so much Ah don' know, dat Ah'm feared ter do what Ah wants ter do — go West an' grow up wid a country!"

Danvers chuckled.

"West, eh?" he said. "Have to keep my eye on you, 'Rastus, or Bob, or whatever your name is. Who are you living with now?"

"Ah's always lived wid de Waltons, suh, de Souf Carline Waltons, Marse Don Walton's down-souf folks. Dey knows all 'bout me.

178 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

"Game's a-gwanter start, suh," the black boy added, with a wink and a side-long grin. "Heah's dat ar Millvale fat boy come ter tell 'em dey can play! Hoo, hoo! Hoo, hoo!"

Evidently 'Rastus meant to begin the jeering this time, and let January have the disadvantage of coming in second; but January was ready for him, early or late.

"They couldn't play at all, hif they were skelintons like you!" he growled. "When a ball 'it 'em, they'd fall apart!"

"Hi say, Skinny," he added, "hif you're the Derry mascot, why don't you hattend to your bloomink business, what? That team of yours needs hall the cheering hup it can get, you 'ear me!"

"I designed, suh," 'Rastus replied, with much dignity. "I ain't de mascot no mo'!"

January snorted contemptuously, as if to say he didn't believe it, but it didn't matter much, anyhow, and walked forward. He hadn't resigned, and he was going to begin to "root" for Millvale right away — with all the more enthusiasm, since, yielding to everybody's wish, Captain Jack had taken his old position, in the box, with Terry in his, behind the bat.

But for several innings it looked as though the rooting had only one-sided virtue. It kept the visitors from scoring, perhaps — though Captain Jack and the rest of the nine may have had some-

thing to do with that — but it didn't help Millvale to score as heavily as January wished her to do.

Derry went to the bat, and struck out in one-two-three order. But Rice and Bowne, the Derry battery, were pretty effective, too, and though Tom Bell reached first on balls, he was no farther than second when the half ended.

Again in the second inning Derry got no safe hit. Ford scored for Millvale on his own single, Cashman's base on balls, and Janvrin's bunt, which Rice threw wide to first.

It was the same old story for Derry in the third. But it looked as if Millvale was getting pretty close to Rice, the Derry twirler, when Tom Bell rapped out a two-bagger, White touched him for a single, Lorimer laced him again for two bases, and Harriott found the ball for another safe hit. Bell and White scored, giving Millvale 3 to Derry's 0.

Nobody on either side made very close connections in the fourth. But in the Derry half of the fifth, January, who had begun to look for a low score and a whitewash, as in the last game with this nine, had a season of deep uneasiness.

Quinn, the Derry shortstop, landed a single and took second on a passed ball. Sterne, the Derry centre fielder, came to the bat.

Sterne was the biggest man on the visiting team, six feet tall and just about as broad, and Lorimer had marked him as a fellow who would set the ball going if he got at it. Hard luck, it

180 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

seemed, that the second ball Captain Jack pitched was the ball Sterne wanted.

Maybe Sterne thought he would test the ability of the Millvale centre, Ben Cashman. Anyway, he smashed the ball so far over Ben's head that Quinn came home and Sterne himself had made the circuit before the ball, almost a wreck from the whack he gave it, got back inside the diamond.

Derry was now 2 to Millvale's 3. It was no great margin of safety, and January popped a lemon drop into his mouth to clear his throat, and braced himself to deal out a superior article of bluff.

"We've got 'em hon the run!" January belowed. "This is the hinning where we score runs and they score herrors! All hup for Millvale and victory by twenty-six to two!"

But Rice, the Derry pitcher, sent back an unbelieving grin as he went into the box. And, as a matter of fact, January was not a good prophet, for the sixth was an errorless inning, in which nobody got a run.

In the seventh there was something doing. It started in the Derry half, and January took a chill when, with Quinn again on second, he saw that Sterne was once more coming to bat.

"It's 'ard lines for hus if 'istory repeats hitself, what?" the fat boy muttered to Jeff Bussey, who was out of the game to-day. "That's the way

they were hin the fifth, ye know, when Sterne got 'is 'omer and brought in Quinn, too! "

And, the very first ball pitched, Sterne caught it fairly and sent it — into left field, this time — hissing over Will Chapin's head.

At the crack of the bat Will turned and started on a dead run. But it looked to everybody as though Sterne had landed another sure thing.

Not so to Chapin. He had gauged the course of that flying sphere to a foot. Far out beyond the territory he was accustomed to cover, he wheeled suddenly and put up his hand. The ball was there!

Quinn had started for home. Now he ran back, touched second, and made a dash for third. But Chapin's eye was on him and Chapin's throwing arm was sound. From the very limit of the grounds he shot the ball to Janvrin at second. Janvrin hurried it to White at third, and White tagged Quinn out, completing the brilliant double play.

" 'Ip, 'ip, 'ip, 'ooroar! " boomed the fat boy. " Three cheers for Chapin, the man as never lets go! Come hup 'ere, Mr. Chapin, and get your bouquet! "

Happily Chapin could get it while the dew was on, for in the Millvale half of the seventh he was the first at bat. While the spectators were still roaring their praise of him, he led off with a drive past second.

182 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

That opened the rally that made the game Millvale's own. To name the hits only, Bell and White followed with singles and Lorimer with a double. Ford's long fly to centre brought in White. Cashman got a single, and Janvrin walloped the ball into right field for three bases, bringing in Cashman with the fifth run of the inning.

"Height to two for Millvale!" roared January, "and we're honly just beginning, ye know!"

It almost looked that way, when, Derry having failed to tally in her half, Bell started the Millvale eighth with a two-bagger. But the run-getting ended with him and White scoring on a base on balls, a wild throw and Harriott's single.

"A short horse soon curried," was Derry in the ninth. For the third time that day Captain Jack struck out her batters in one-two-three order, and the game was Millvale's by a score of 10 to 2.

About this time January really wanted to see 'Rastus. Even though the black fellow had "designed," and was no longer the Derry mascot, he came from Derry, and he would be fair sport.

But 'Rastus looked anything but woebegone when January found him standing beside Mr. Danvers. In fact, he was grinning so very cheerfully that January forgot the brilliant gibe he meant to let loose, and could only stammer:

"Hi say, ye know, you can't play ball, ye know! You hought to — to go West!"

And to January's amazement and deep chagrin 'Rastus opened his wide mouth wider, and replied:

“Yassuh, I's a-gwanter! Gwanter go wid Marse Danvers!”

CHAPTER XXII

GIRLS PRESENT, A BOY MISSING

BUT, though 'Rastus and others might go, the Millvale girls were remaining — and they were bound their presence should not be overlooked.

Nora McGrady had hinted, but Terry didn't understand. Clare Bell had made significant remarks, but they went over the head of her brother Tom, who, like Terry, having passed the entrance examination for Harvard, felt that all his worries were ended. But Terry and Tom and the rest of the boys came to earth with a thud, on a Saturday evening just before the Fourth of July, when "the crowd" gathered on Mr. Roxton's big piazza.

"Captain Lorimer," May began, "did you ever hear of the Millvalé Tennis Club?" Her voice was sweet and her face was guileless, but somehow Jack felt that there was something behind this innocent question, and he thought twice before he replied.

"Oh, yes, we've heard of it," he said. "We don't hear so much as we would if it was a boys'

club, because ladies don't put themselves forward, but we're glad to know it's flourishing — "

" How do you know? " May interrupted.

" Eh? What? "

" How should you know? " May went on, rapidly. " You boys hardly ever come near the court — never, it seems, when there's anything else to do or any other place to go — and I don't see how you can know anything about the club, or why you should pretend to feel any interest in it! "

May spoke as if she meant it, and the nods and murmurs of the other girls lent emphasis to her words. Captain Jack saw that the danger-signal was up, but he couldn't quite see how to " get by," and he tried the gentle method again.

" I don't think that's quite fair to us, child," he said. " You girls come to our games, and we — "

" Exactly! " May interrupted again. " We come to your games and cheer you to victory, but you let our grounds and our games severely alone. We don't like it, and we've just about decided to boycott your sports until you condescend to notice ours." And all the girls applauded.

The boys looked at each other. This was serious indeed. And since Captain Jack had been knocked down twice, so to speak, Terry like a good fellow took his turn at risking assault and battery.

" 'Tis not so very long ago — the day Miss

186 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

Woodside was here — that the tennis-court was full to running over," he argued. "Sure if any more had come, that day, you'd have had to tie them on with a string."

"We don't thank you for that," Clare Bell replied. "Miss Woodside was here, as you say, and you boys had been asked to help entertain and be nice to her, and you couldn't very well do anything else. We're the ones you're neglecting — we and our game, as May says!"

Ned Harriott buried his face in his hands and groaned. This was the first time he had really seen Clare this week, for twice he had been sent away from the house on the plea that she was busy dressmaking for the summer; and it struck him that, so far as he was concerned, Clare was rather "rubbing it in." But he did not like to remind her of that, before the crowd, and while he was thinking of something wise and clever to say, May took up the complaint.

"There isn't one of you athletes but would be the better for a course in tennis!" she declared. "Ask any trainer, and I'm sure he'll tell you that the game develops speed of movement and quickness of decision and sound judgment of distance, and exercises every muscle in the body.

"Why," she added, warmly, "you boys think you're doing a fine thing when you make a hit in a game of ball — and yet the ball seldom goes more than a foot or two wide of a given point, for the



"CAPTAIN JACK HAD RISEN ABRUPTLY."

pitcher knows if it does it's at his risk — that the batter may get his base on balls. But in tennis one must be ready to return a ball aimed to fall anywhere within an area of more than a thousand square feet! ”

“ Did we ever deny that you girls are smarter than we are? ” Terry asked, mildly. “ Sure, if any fellow does, I'll ram him into one of those cannon beside the Soldiers' Monument, and fire him off Fourth of July morning! ”

But Tom Bell took another line of argument.

“ I doubt if you'd have any use for us, if we were hanging round you all the time,” he said. “ A confirmed girl-tagger is not much good to himself or anybody else! ” Nor did the girls object to that statement. In fact, they laughed and nodded their agreement.

“ We want you to follow the happy medium,” May replied. “ Please understand we're protesting on behalf of the game, not on our own account. It's a good game, and it hurts our feelings to have it neglected.

“ Where are you going, Jack? ” she asked. For Captain Jack had risen abruptly, motioning his chums to rise from their chairs or cushions and follow him.

“ You've made it imperative, Miss Roxton, that the Millvale Athletic Club, or this fraction of it, shall hold a special meeting,” Lorimer answered, soberly. “ We must take action at once on your

188 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

complaint, and of course we'll have to leave you all to find your way home, while we go over to the gym and do things in regular order."

"Oh, fudge! Jack Lorimer. You're planning some joke on us, and you can just go down to the summer-house for five minutes and hold your old meeting there."

"Will you promise not to peek?"

"Of course we won't listen! Go along, before I smother you with this cushion — and come back soon," May added softly.

Sedately, even solemnly, the boys followed their leader across the lawn. Just as soberly they strode back, five minutes later, and Captain Jack, with an air of great dignity and importance, delivered his report.

"Speaking on behalf of the Millvale Athletic Club, President Roxton," he said, "I have the honour to inform you that your apology is accepted — that we apologize, I should say — and that we hold ourselves, individually and collectively, at your service. On Monday, Bell and Harriott will report for duty at the tennis-court at 10 A.M., with their tin dinner-pails, and at 2 P.M. McGrady and Lorimer will arrive, all four prepared to work until knocking-off time. On Tuesday, Chapin and Bussey —"

But here May interrupted him.

"Why, you mean creature!" she cried. "Do you dare to tell us that tennis seems such a bore to

you that you're assigning the boys to take turns at it, just as they might at — at digging a ditch? Why, that's adding insult to injury!"

"Keep cool, child, keep cool!" Captain Jack had resumed his seat beside her, and now he spoke seriously. "We want to please you and give your game a fair show, and since we have engagements of our own, you know, the only fair way to all concerned is to find out what free days we have and volunteer the time to you.

"We know, for instance, that four of us can be with you Monday. Possibly, when we've passed the word around, a dozen fellows may come out, but we'll promise you four, anyway, so you can arrange sets in advance, on that understanding. If we're going to reform, we'll have to make a systematic start. After we get the tennis habit, things will arrange themselves, but if we left it all to chance at the beginning, you might have twenty-five fellows at the court on Monday and only one on Tuesday. See the point?"

Probably they all did, and at any rate nobody made a protest. It was time to change the subject. Yet no one could have foreseen the topic that was now to be introduced, any more than he could have anticipated the arrival of the man who came hesitatingly up the long walk, lifted his hat to the group, and singled out Lorimer with his eyes.

"Mr. Lorimer, may I have a few words in private?" he asked.

190 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

"Certainly, sir."

It was Mr. Horton, the principal of Roxbridge High, who called. Wondering what business that cranky enemy of athletics could have with him, Lorimer went forward where he stood — a tall, lean figure with a sour, disagreeable face, which now showed traces of some strong emotion — and led the way to the summer-house.

"I — well — the fact is —" The visitor seemed to find some difficulty in making a start — perhaps, Jack reflected, because he was ashamed to ask anything of a fellow he had so often abused. He cleared his throat and tried again.

"The fact is, my nephew, Charles Pratt, a member of the graduating class of my school, has run away," he said. "We have reason to believe that he is in this region — roaming the woods, it may be, somewhere between Winterton on the one side and Derry on the other. He is not physically qualified to endure hardship. He should be returned to his home at once. But to set the police on his track is naturally abhorrent to his mother, my sister, and —"

He hesitated a moment, and for that length of time Captain Jack was tempted to make him go on and tell what he wanted, hard as it might be. But the next moment Lorimer decided that would be a petty revenge, even though the man had been unfriendly; and he said, in a matter-of-fact way:

"You wish us to find him?"

Principal Horton grasped the suggestion eagerly.

"If you can do so, his parents and I would be very grateful," he answered. "Of course we realize the difficulties in the way —"

"Not many, sir, to trained athletes who know the territory," Jack couldn't help replying. And this time Horton didn't have anything nasty to say about athletes.

"Suppose we find him," Lorimer went on; "is there any reason why he should be afraid to go home?"

From the little he had seen and heard of Pratt — the fellow who had manufactured the bogus postage stamps and sold them to collectors — Captain Jack had little doubt that there was a shameful story behind the runaway; and the visitor's words and manner, when the question was asked, certainly bore out the idea.

"There is not — at present," he answered, after a moment's thought. "You may say to Charles that everything has been arranged and there will be no trouble.

"I greatly appreciate your courtesy in this matter," Principal Horton added. He acted as though, if he knew how, he would like to make up for his surly behaviour in the past by expressing repentance and good-will. But Lorimer steered the talk away from the point to which the Roxbridge man was awkwardly trying to lead it. Horton was in trouble, and this was no time to

192 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

remind him of the mean things he had said and done.

"Tell Pratt's mother to keep her courage up," he said. "We'll find the boy if he's anywhere round, and do it soon." And the principal, greatly comforted, started back to Roxbridge, while Captain Jack returned to notify his crowd and send word to Doverdale, Winterton, and Derry.

"It's a new way to celebrate the Fourth, to spend it in hunting for a whelp like Pratt," he muttered to himself. "And yet I suppose there might be worse ways!"

CHAPTER XXIII

ON THE SEARCH FOR SENSATIONS

INDEED there are worse ways of celebrating. And it looked as if January had started out to find some.

The fat boy's interest in Independence Day had been aroused three months before, when Mr. Lanard told at the gym one evening how he, as a lad, helped to "borrow" an old cannon at Winterton. They carted it twelve miles, to the top of Shooter's Hill, loaded it to the muzzle, and fired it until it burst. But in the meantime the Winterton boys, scouting on their trail, had found the supply of guns and ammunition that Seth and his chums intended to use when the cannon wore out, and had stolen the lot.

This seemed so funny to January, and he was so taken up with the subject, that for his benefit the fellows in the club revived their memories of things they did when they were young and fond of making a noise. Of course the boys who were nearer January's age added stacks of information about what they intended to do. And by the time "the day before" came around, January had it

194 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

all fixed to blind and deafen Millvale — provided in the first place he did not blow his own head off.

An old navy revolver he had bought months earlier was the smallest part of his outfit; and yet that would make as much racket as a good-sized cannon. In addition to it, January had O'Brien's shotgun — "borrowed" beforehand, in the way boys do borrow such things at this time of year; ten pounds of powder; an armful of cannon crackers; punk, fuse, matches, everything he could need, even to a dark lantern.

And there were other articles in his collection, a sample of which Mains caught — literally, caught — just in time.

It was on the morning of the third that Lou, going into his little office at the gym, had occasion to reach up to a row of shelves to get an old newspaper. The shelf was above his head, and he gave a careless tug at the sheet.

Sailing down with it came a small grayish-brown cylinder of some greasy-looking substance, which one who didn't know might have taken for an odd-shaped cake of soap. Involuntarily, as an old ball player will, Lou put up his hand and seized it just as it was about to strike the corner of his desk. Then he took a good look at it, and nearly fainted. It was a dynamite cartridge.

"For goodness' sake!" Mains gasped.

Laying the cartridge tenderly in a drawer, he climbed on a chair and looked along the shelf from

SEARCH FOR SENSATIONS 195

which it had fallen. Then indeed his hair bristled; for on that shelf were five more of the cartridges, and one of them just on the point of rolling off the edge.

Very gently Mains removed them and locked them up, and then sat down to meditate. It was absurd to suppose that any enemy had left the cartridges in that place — they had been put there by somebody who had free access to the gym. And yet it didn't seem possible that any of the fellows would do so crazy a thing.

Must have been January! Mains couldn't restrain a grin, though he was angry, too. But he had calmed down by the time the fat boy came in to attend to the wildcat, and he asked in an everyday tone:

"What are you going to do with the dynamite cartridges?"

Then it was January's turn to grin. He thought he had planned a great scheme, and he was anxious to talk about it.

"Hi'm a-going to tie one hunder the cover of hevery man'ole hout 'ere along the street," he answered readily. "Then Hi'll hexplode 'em one by one, and we'll 'ave the biggest celebration hin town, right 'ere in front of the gym!"

"Who's going to pay for perhaps a thousand dollars' worth of damage to the sewer and the pavement?" Mains demanded, sternly. "Suppose somebody gets his head smashed with a flying

196 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

fragment of one of those manhole covers, who makes good? ”

January's mouth gaped open and he stood staring, paralyzed and speechless.

“ Suppose I'd flung a book up on that shelf, as I often do when I'm sitting at my desk, how much would have been left of me — or the gym? ” Mains went on grimly. But at that January's trance of surprise and terror was broken, and he set up a bellow that made Lou want to run.

“ Hi didn't think, Mr. Mains! ” he cried between his sobs. “ Hall Hi was a-thinking of was making a noise, ye know. Hi'll take 'em hout and throw 'em away! ”

“ No you won't, ” the director of the gym responded, firmly. “ I'll dispose of those cartridges myself. Shut up, now! You're disturbing the wildcat! ”

Probably January was spoiling morning naps in Winterton and Roxbridge, too, for his roars of contrition and distress might almost have been heard in either place. But finally Mains calmed him and made him wash his face, and then preached him a little sermon on Fourth of July celebrations.

“ You haven't any right to destroy property or endanger life — your own or another's — or seriously annoy your neighbours, ” Mains said. “ We give boys a chance to make a noise on the Fourth because they are boys, not because we think noise

SEARCH FOR SENSATIONS 197

means patriotism. You can show patriotism, a little of it, by not making your noise in a hoodlum way. Understand?"

"Yes, sir; thank ye, sir," said January, meekly. At any rate, he understood that he mustn't tamper with dynamite cartridges.

This was the introduction to a rather lively day, and for half an hour or so most of the interest and excitement centred around the gym. Having notified the athletes in Doverdale, Winterton, and Derry to take up the hunt for the runaway boy from Roxbridge, Captain Jack was now ready to start his own crowd — though it is true that nobody showed much enthusiasm over the object of the search.

"Sure, if they had the luck to lose a fellow like Pratt, 'tis beyond me to guess why they should try to find him again!" said Terry.

"Some menagerie has made an offer for him, maybe," suggested Horace White.

"It doesn't seem to me he's the kind of fellow to take to the woods, anyhow," Tom Bell argued. "He's no athlete, and isn't used to outdoor life, and you'll find that such a boy naturally hunts for company. I'd a good deal sooner expect to find him loafing around Boston than in any of the places where we're invited to look." But Captain Jack had information to offset this theory.

"Guess this will prove an exception to your rule, Tom," he answered. "Mr. Horton assures

198 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

me that Pratt never wanted to go to the city unless he had a lot of money to spend, and when he left home he had little or no money. On the other hand, he's a dime novel fiend, always longed to be a hunter and trapper, and his folks feel pretty sure he's made for the woods this time."

"What's he living on — the game he slays?" Sewall Ford inquired.

"Probably begs his meals from the farmers. They'd feed a boy, you know, where they'd set the dog on a full-grown tramp."

"I'll bet you four dollars they make him work for what he gets, just the same!" Sewall replied. "Where I'll expect to find Chawles is down on his knees, weeding somebody's onion bed!"

This was possible, as Jack admitted, and the searchers ought to inquire at outlying houses. Then, with the help of a big map of the city and suburbs, he instructed the fellows so that, working two by two, they would cover the region thoroughly by nightfall. Wishing each other luck, they left the gym.

For themselves, Jack and Terry had selected the hardest and most uninviting territory. They got some fun out of the tramp, for two live boys can extract pleasure from a day outdoors in any surroundings; but they found not the slightest clue to the missing lad. And when they got back to the gym at dark, it was to hear a similar report from every other investigator.

SEARCH FOR SENSATIONS 199

Tom Bell summed up the situation.

"He isn't in Millvale," he said, emphatically, "unless he's smuggled away in some house right here in the city. If he is, I don't see but he'll have to stay until he gets ready to come out. We can't very well make a door-to-door canvass."

Winterton and Doverdale likewise "drew blank." From Derry there came a faint suggestion of success. Away off at the outer edge of the town, a boy who in some particulars answered to Pratt's description had begged food that morning. But after he had received it he seemed to have dropped out of sight, and the amateur detective who had learned that much had been unable to find out any more.

As Lorimer turned from the telephone to repeat the message to his friends, Terry winked at him.

"Incidentally, we'll find Pratt," Terry said.

"Eh? You fellows going to Derry?" somebody asked.

"Indeed we are! We plan great doings for to-morrow, I'd have you know! We shall open the celebration with a salute — let off a cannon under January's window. In the forenoon we shall win a baseball game from Winterton. We. Oh, of course, there'll be seven more of you on the field, but you'll not count. And in the afternoon —

"Shall I tell them what we'll do in the afternoon, Jack?" Terry added.

200 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

"Better not. We may not get the chance to do it."

"'Tis a likely story, that anybody could refuse me anything!" Terry retorted. "Sure, if his gas holds out —"

"If anybody's gas runs short, you can lend some of yours, you old blatherskite!" Tom Bell struck in with a grin. "Turn it off, now, and let's talk business — about the lost child."

But the only conclusion that could be reached was that, since Jack and Terry were going to Derry next day, the case would better be left in their hands. They would hear more fully the story of the alleged discovery, and decide whether the clue was worth pursuing. And "incidentally" they might find Pratt, as Terry had said.

CHAPTER XXIV

THAT PASSENGER OUTSIDE THE CAR

BANG, bang, bang! Crash! Bang!

January Jones was a heavy sleeper. When he went to bed he had solemnly promised himself he would stay there only two or three hours and be out by midnight at the latest. Now the glow of dawn was in the sky. He had snored peacefully through the fusilade with which the holiday was opened. But the din beneath his window was so tremendous that it fairly lifted him out of bed and left him standing, scared and trembling, in the middle of the floor, wondering what had happened.

Bang, bang! Crash! Bang, bang!

Then he remembered.

"Hi say, you know, it's the bloomink Fourth!" January muttered. "Hi hought to wake hup and do me share, what?"

His ears still ringing from the terrific explosions, the fat boy waddled to the window and looked down into the street. Nobody there!

He rubbed his eyes and looked again, with the same result. Then he dragged out the old navy

202 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

pistol and let it off five times; and, as he did so, he thought he understood the sounds he had heard at first.

"Hi must 'ave fired 'er off hin me sleep!" he said. "It's 'ard luck to use cartridges and 'ave no fun of 'em, what?"

The truth was that Tom Lorimer and Roger Ahearn had expended ten cannon crackers on a salute to January — and then dashed out of sight. But it would have been difficult to persuade the fat boy of that. Shaking his head solemnly over his waste of cartridges, he stuck the revolver in his belt and crept down-stairs.

Most of his ammunition was at the gym. But he had kept out a few big crackers to experiment with at home — for he never had fired one — and now he laid one under a sardine tin that he found in the gutter, lighted the fuse, watched a minute, and then turned away.

Bang! He was a little too close, or he did not turn soon enough. Something scraped up the back of his head, lifting his cap and shaving off a handful of hair; and he staggered a step or two and sat down on the edge of the sidewalk.

"Hi say, you know, that's 'ot stuff, what!" he gasped. "Hi'll 'ave to touch off me crackers with a long stick!"

Very cautiously he handled the next one. First he hunted up a round tin can and carried it out to the middle of the street. Then he lighted the

cracker at the very tip of the fuse, clapped the can over it, and sprinted for the opposite sidewalk.

Bang! It was a muffled roar, this time; but, as the cracker exploded, up went the can. Like a rocket it sailed for twenty feet or so; then, curving inward gracefully, smash! it flew through the window of Mr. O'Brien's bedroom.

Just a minute January looked after it with horror-stricken eyes. Then he got around the corner as fast as his legs could carry him; and he kept on running until he was half-way to the gym.

Some of his troubles ended when he reached that welcome retreat. For Tom Lorimer and Roger Ahearn were there, and they were too fond of January to encourage him to do anything that threatened his safety. Yet he was a hard-looking character when Captain Jack encountered him, just before the baseball game with Winterton.

Lorimer stood him up, turned him around, and glanced him over.

"It'll take a pretty good stock of court-plaster, sweet oil, and rags to fix you up, if you live till bedtime," Jack remarked. But the fat boy only grinned.

"Ho yus, Hi'm 'aving a bully time, thank ye, sir!" he answered.

After all, Lorimer reflected, as he walked away, smiling in sympathy, that was what a fellow wanted. And it was more than he himself got out of the ball game, for Winterton was weak, pain-

204 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

fully so, and there was little pleasure in defeating the nine, as Millvale did, by a score of eighteen to three.

To the afternoon, however, he looked forward with keen anticipation. For the feature of the holiday at Derry was to be a balloon ascension, and he and Terry expected to be the aeronaut's guests.

It seemed too good to be true — to Jack, at any rate — yet when they reached the Common, where the balloon was being inflated, the way Logan, the aeronaut, greeted Terry, showed that they two were on very good terms.

"Glad to meet you, Mr. Lorimer, or any friend of this young man's," he said, with a nod and a smile toward McGrady. "You two think you'd like to go up with me? Well, I guess by the looks of you I'll be safe."

Somebody called him, and he turned to direct the movements of those who were busy with the silken globe. Slowly it rose. Fully distended at length, it swayed about in the sunlight like a great pear, held to the ground by the ballast and a half-dozen guy ropes.

It was all ready, apparently, and so was the aeronaut; but at the moment when it seemed he was about to summon the boys forward, a committeeman took him one side and started a conversation which bade fair to be endless.

Stepping modestly back toward the crowd,

Jack and Terry looked around them. Friends were there, including all the members of the Derry nine. But there were also two who may have felt less kindly toward them — Earle and Crawford, the battery that, caught at crooked practices, Lorimer had caused to be turned out of a league game.

"Those two Millvale fellows going up?" they overheard Crawford say to one of the Derry boys. "What for? Fun? Huh!" He whispered to Earle a minute. The pitcher went over to the car and, leaning back against it, one hand behind him and the other arm wound around a rope, stood looking at the chums malignantly.

"'Tis a vicious little beast!" Terry muttered. "Sure I think he means to hold it down!"

Lorimer laughed. It amused him to notice that, even as Logan broke away from the committeeman and called them, Earle kept his place beside the car.

"Take a good grip of the ropes, men!" the aeronaut called. "Out with half the sand-bags, there! Now, boys, pile in!"

They stepped into the car and stood ready for the start.

"Ready, there!" sang out the aeronaut. "Attention, men! Let go!"

Into the air shot the balloon. And up went Earle!

Things had moved more rapidly at the last than

206 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

he anticipated, and as the balloon rose up beside him he seemed to lose his head. Instead of stepping away he made a clutch for the edge of the car. The next instant he was hanging by one hand, a hundred feet from the ground.

"Look out, there!" "Help, help!" "Oh, oh, save him!" Such were some of the cries that arose from the crowd on the Common; and, even as they sounded, Captain Jack leaned over and took a firm grip on the collar of the involuntary aeronaut.

There was very little wind, and the ascent of the balloon had been almost perpendicular. But after the first rocketlike leap it seemed suddenly to feel Earle's weight, and steadied itself, hanging about five hundred feet in the air. Then Logan saw what had happened, and leaped for the valve to let out some of the gas.

A dreadful stillness was over all. No sound was heard from below. The crowd on the Common, like the three in the car, were speechless with fear of a catastrophe. Earle seemed to be unconscious.

Through the silence came the hiss of the escaping gas, and the balloon began to descend. The aeronaut cast a quick glance downward. They were over another field, and no better place could have been found to carry out the purpose he had in mind.

"Hold on a minute more," he said. "Has the boy let go?"



**"LEANED OVER AND TOOK A FIRM GRIP ON THE COLLAR OF THE
INVOLUNTARY AERONAUT."**

"Yes," Jack answered between his teeth. "He's just dead weight. I'll have to let go, too!"

"Just a second! Just a second more!" Logan pulled the valve cord and stopped the escape of gas. Then he hurried forward and leaned over. "All right!" he said. "I have him!"

With a long sigh of relief Lorimer loosened his grip and sank back on the floor of the car.

"Sit down, Terry," Logan said, sharply. "We may get a little bump. Here you go, my friend!"

The balloon had swept downward like a huge bird. In another moment the car would have struck with a shock that must have been decidedly unpleasant. But, half a dozen feet from the earth, the aeronaut let go of Earle.

Glancing down, the boys could see the Derry pitcher turning somersaults like an acrobat. In the reaction from the strain they had been under, they roared with laughter. Then, as they saw the crowd which had followed the balloon come running to the spot where Earle had landed, the earth once more seemed to fall away beneath them, and again they were up in the clouds.

CHAPTER XXV

IN THE NETTING WITH LOGAN

"DON'T move," said Logan. "We're all right, and so is our friend below there — except that I suppose he's suffered a bit of a shock."

"Sure, I know how he feels," Terry muttered. "I've had one myself!" And though Lorimer contrived to smile, his eyes were still filled with the wild emotion of the scene in which he had borne so important a part.

"Just managed to swallow my heart," he said. "It's been in my mouth for quite awhile."

"All right, since you didn't lose that, or your head," rejoined the aeronaut. "I'm proud of both of you — you, especially, Lorimer. You did a splendid thing!"

"Oh, I just got hold by instinct, and then hung on."

"Instinct, eh? Pluck and nerve, most people would call it. All is, I'm mighty glad you lads were with me, instead of some men I've taken up."

They had risen now into a brisk current of air, and Derry Common was gliding rapidly away behind them. For a time they were able to localize

and identify the scenes below; but, after Logan had thrown out a bag of sand, the earth seemed to become a huge, dark mass, with everything upon it looking flat, ill-defined, and insignificant.

"Has a fog come up?" Terry asked, wonderingly.

"No, we're passing through a cloud, that's all."

Indeed in half a minute they were again in sunlight, with a glorious scene beneath them. Letting out a little gas, the aeronaut steadied the balloon, and it seemed to be sailing a sea of golden foam.

The clouds are never still. They change form fast and continually, and one who watches from the land sees many shapes of beauty. As seen from above, the changes are of course much more apparent, and, since the dark earth is below, the sunlight turns the clouds to gold, the shadows, if one may call them such, being of cream and opal and pearl.

Rolling along before the wind, momentarily assuming a different aspect, but each a shape of majesty and a dream of colour, the cloud masses offered such a panorama as the boys had never seen or imagined.

"Well?" said the aeronaut, watching their awe-stricken faces.

"Fairyland!" Jack murmured.

Here above the clouds there was nothing to remind them of the earth below. Until they

210 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

reached this point, some sounds could be heard with tolerable distinctness. Now the clouds deadened the hum of life and movement. Hushed by the magic of the shifting scene, the boys were silent, and the aeronaut stood erect and still.

Click!

It sounded no more than the snapping of a thread, but the watchful aeronaut heard it, and ran his quick eye over the ropes that were in sight. All seemed sound and firm.

"Keep quite still, please!" he said in the lowest of tones. For a moment the boys held their breath.

Click!

It was the same sound as before, and this time Logan caught the direction from which it came.

"Stay on that side of the car. Don't move," he said quietly.

Catching hold of the ring above, he leaned over the side of the car, and scanned the ropes that held it. Frayed ends could have been seen by eyes less experienced than his. Still holding the ring, he passed his other hand across the ropes: three were uninjured, three were defective — and those last three were parting rapidly.

"Boys," said Logan, coolly, "I'd like to test your nerve. Do you think you dare to sit on the ring?"

They only laughed for answer. In a moment

they were up, and lolling back in the netting, which held them securely enough, though it looked terribly frail.

"Mind you don't slip through the ropes," Logan added. "You'd find you had some distance to fall."

"'Tis the sudden stop I'd be afraid of," Terry commented. "The falling would be easy."

"To balance the balloon," said Logan, "I must get into the netting on the other side." In a leisurely way he did so, and settled back facing his companions.

"Now I feel comfortable," he said.

"Same here," said Jack.

"Me, too," added Terry.

"Sure you're not afraid?" Logan inquired.

"Say, Terry, shall we tip him out?" was Lorimer's answer. It seemed to satisfy the aeronaut.

"All right, then," he said, "I'll let you into a little secret. Some scoundrel has been tampering with the ropes below. They are cut through, and in a few minutes they must have parted. Then one side of the car would have dropped down, and — you understand."

Indeed they did understand, and it was only natural if their cheeks lost a little colour as they stared at him and each other, and mentally pictured that terrible fall through space, so villainously planned, so narrowly averted.

212 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

"Do you suspect anybody?" Jack asked, after a moment. The aeronaut shook his head.

"I'm a stranger in Derry," he said. "I can't conceive a reason why anybody should wish to injure me. Either it's sheer cussedness on the part of a monomaniac, or else somebody wanted to pay one of you lads a delicate attention. Any suspicions of your own?"

Yes, Jack and Terry had. They recalled the affair of Earle and Crawford, and they remembered the length of time that Earle had leaned against the car. But it would not be fair to denounce the fellow on the strength of such insufficient evidence, and they kept their thoughts to themselves.

"Mind you, it's likely enough that the person who did this intended nothing serious, I mean, nothing murderous," Logan said, a moment later. "Probably he thought the ropes would part as soon as weight was put on them, and the car would spill us out into the crowd before we had fairly started. It's just the kind of performance that passes with some people as a practical joke. Trouble is, you know, it doesn't pay to joke around a balloon.

"We must go down," he added. "If the wind should spring up, we'd find it no fun to roost on this perch and play canary!"

He opened the valve, and in a few seconds they were in the clouds again. Another brief interval,

and the earth was once more in sight. Apparently it was rising toward them, even as it had seemed to drop down when they ascended.

Below them was a broad expanse of cultivated land, and a score or more of men and boys were tearing across the fields, following them up.

As they came near the earth, evidently destined now to land at the edge of a corn-field, the aeronaut climbed lightly into the car again, and, holding on to the ring, regulated the descent by throwing out sand.

Excited and breathless, the enthusiasts who had chased the balloon came galloping forward and laid hold of the car. Above it the balloon was rapidly collapsing.

"Out we go, boys," said the aeronaut. "Wish you'd give me a hand to pull the silk over and spread it flat. We've not been through any rain, and unless it proves that our friend back in Derry played some prank with the bag — which I hardly think — we'll be able to fold it up, half an hour hence, and make a start for home."

There was help enough at hand; in fact, rather too much of it, and almost as fast as Logan could give directions for handling the silk, they were carried into effect. But the Derry enthusiasts were not very careful where they trod, in the course of their volunteer labours, and it need not have surprised anybody that, in the course of ten minutes or so, they got a warning to be careful.

214 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

"Hey, you fellows!" somebody cried, "Mr. Burr wants you to keep out of his corn!"

Captain Jack lifted his head quickly. Not many yards distant, on a path that skirted the edge of the meadow, stood the boy who had spoken. Few would have taken him for a city lad. He was "country," of the stage countryman type, even to the old-fashioned straw hat — so very "country" that it roused suspicion — suspicion that became certainty when Lorimer caught a glimpse of his face.

"Hello, Pratt!" Jack cried. "I've got a message for you!"

But at the mention of the name the boy started, stared, and then turned and ran up the path at the top of his speed.

CHAPTER XXVI

HOME BY A ROUNDABOUT WAY

JACK and Terry were not prepared for that, and Pratt had the advantages of distance and a knowledge of the ground. He led them quite a chase, until, reaching a clump of bushes, he doubled back into the corn-field, evidently intending to drop down and hide between the rows. But the rustling betrayed him, and, gasping and breathless, he finally stopped and faced the comrades desperately.

"See here," he whined. "I haven't done anything to you fellows. What are you after me for?"

"Your uncle sent us," Captain Jack answered. "Here's a note from him," and he showed a few lines Mr. Horton had pencilled. "We've promised to take you back to Roxbridge. Put on some civilized clothes and get ready to start. What are you doing in that scarecrow rig, anyhow?"

"I'm — I'm disguised, you know," Pratt faltered. "I was going to keep out of sight until — until the thing blew over." He did not say what "the thing" was. "I got pretty hungry, staying

216 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

around in the woods, and at last I came out and offered to work here for my board, and I put on some old clothes the last boy left, so nobody would know me.

"It's been awful!" Pratt ended with a sob of self-pity. "I've had to get up at four o'clock and work till long after dark. And yesterday old Burr set me to learn to milk and a rotten old cow kicked me half-way across the barn!"

"Sure I guess there's no doubt you needed a kicking," Terry commented. "Oh, we're not after giving you any," he added, hastily, as Pratt dodged backward. "Dress yourself, and meet us over there by the balloon — quick."

But Pratt still hesitated.

"Which way are you going back?" he asked.

"We've been up in a balloon," Lorimer explained. "Our friend the aeronaut will probably get a wagon to take it back to Derry Common, where the rest of his outfit is. We shall go with him, that far, and then, if you think you need an escort, or if we think you can't be trusted to go straight home, we'll take the train for Roxbridge and deliver you into the hands of your folks."

Pratt drew a long breath of relief.

"I wish you would," he said. "There are two or three fellows in Roxbridge who threatened to lick me, and I've had so much trouble lately, I don't see how I can stand any more."

"Sure it's easy to get over that," Terry re-

torted, bluntly. "Lick them, and then they'll be the ones to have trouble!" But Pratt sighed and shook his head, as if to say that it couldn't be fixed that way.

"Well, well, get a move on!" Lorimer said, impatiently. "We'll take you to your own door — and confound you for a nuisance!" he added under his breath; for there were many things he wished to do in the few hours that remained before bedtime.

Above all, and this was the nearest thing, he wished to confirm or disprove his suspicion that it was Earle who, while leaning against the car, had severed the ropes that held the car to the balloon. If Earle had put through that malicious "joke," which might have been the death of them, he probably felt differently about it now.

It was nearly an hour later before they were ready to pack the balloon into a wagon and start for the Common, and when they arrived there, escorted by a large and growing crowd of men and boys, Earle and Crawford were nowhere to be found.

"Earle wasn't hurt when you folks in the balloon let go of him," said Walton, the captain of the Derry nine. "Of course his nerves got an awful shock, though, from the whole experience. When he heard it was you that gripped him and saved his life, he looked like he'd seen a ghost, and then he began to cry in a way that would break your heart.

218 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

Oh, we took him home and got a doctor. He's fixed for a good lay-off, I reckon! "

Terry nodded at Jack significantly. For his own part, he had little doubt that it was Earle who cut the ropes. Lorimer's return of good for evil would be his severest punishment.

And even while the fellows were saying good-bye to Logan the aeronaut, and pledging him to visit Millvale, they got some light on the question from Walton, who pushed hurriedly forward again and spoke to them in an undertone.

"They've just telephoned from Earle's," he said. "He's been almost crazy — talking about the car breaking down and throwing you fellows out, and all such nonsense. Couldn't be quieted, they say. I told them nothing had happened, and you came down all right and had gone home.

"Was there anything queer about that ascent?" Walton added, in a meaning way.

"Queer?" Lorimer repeated, as if he didn't understand. "Why, we had an interesting time. I suppose Earle's head is upset by the little ride he took." He winked at Terry as he spoke. Though they were satisfied of Earle's guilt, they did not wish to proclaim it, especially if, as it seemed, he was suffering and repentant.

"Come on, Pratt," Terry called. "Sure there are times when I want to cry as bad as Earle, and this is one of the times!" he muttered, as the Roxbridge fellow slouched forward in his hangdog

fashion. "'Tis our business, though, since we're tied to it, to handle it gently."

Thus they did their best for the runaway, in the course of the ride to Roxbridge. Neither of them liked him, but they realized there was good in him, as in everybody else, and they tried to find it and give him a start along that line. They were more than civil to him, and though they corrected him pretty sharply when he expressed sentiments they didn't approve, he seemed to end with a liking for them.

"I'm grateful to you two," he said, as they parted at the corner of his street in Roxbridge. "I wish I might meet you again!"

"That's easy," Captain Jack answered. "We're always at home. No need to wear your dress suit or talk dictionary. All we ask is that a visitor's clean. Good luck!"

"We could straighten him out if we had him in Millvale," Terry muttered as they turned away. "A few good thumpings for a starter —"

"I don't know, Terry," Captain Jack interrupted. "I'm beginning to think we ought to take hold of boys when they're younger, say twelve, or even ten. I'm working out a scheme —"

"But no, I won't talk about it just yet," he added. "When I can see my own way through it I want to talk it to you, and if you think it looks all right —"

220 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

" Meantime," Terry suggested, slyly, " we might be training down January! "

Jack laughed. He saw the point.

" And yet," he argued, " I don't know about that. January has already stopped growing sideways and begun to grow up and down. His heart and lungs are sound, he's strong as a horse and he isn't carrying the flabby kind of fat that he wore six months ago. He's young, yet. I want to watch him awhile, just making sure he's leading a straight, active life, until I see what nature means to do with him."

What gunpowder would do with him, seemed, however, the more urgent question just at present. January was resting from his labours when, in the early evening, the fellows got over to their own grounds. Cheerful as ever, he looked a total wreck.

" What about that bandage over your left eye? " demanded Captain Jack.

" Ho yus, thank ye, sir, a piece of a cracker came hup and 'it me, ye know," the fat boy replied. " Didn't 'urt me heye, but burned hall around, ye know, and the bloomink doctor covered it hup. Hi'm all right, ye know. Hi'm 'aving a bully time! "

Lorimer wet his finger and rubbed a spot perhaps an inch square on the other fellow's cheek.

" How'd you get that powder into your skin? "

he asked. And this time January looked a little unhappy.

"Mr. Ho'Brien's bloomink gun busted," he replied. He volunteered no further explanations, and Captain Jack asked none. It was to O'Brien that January would have to talk, and it would be a little rough on him to make him say it twice.

"And so you think there's nothing the matter with the Fourth of July?" Captain Jack suggested.

"The Fourth of July's hall right," January answered. "Hi'm glad Hi'm 'ere, and Hi'm glad Hi'm not a girl, what? Ho yus, thank ye, sir, Hi'm thankful Hi'm a Hamerican boy!"

CHAPTER XXVII

WHEN LORIMER PUT HIMSELF OUT

OF course the fat boy survived the Fourth. Nor did that day see the last of Pratt — who, in fact, was destined to figure quite prominently in future doings of the Millvale boys. But all that is properly a part of "Jack Lorimer's Holidays," a story yet to be told, and all that needs to be said here is, that, thanks to the service Jack and Terry had rendered the family, Principal Horton seemed now to feel much better disposed toward athletes in general.

Not that the Millvale fellows worried about his opinion, any more than they did about the sentiments of Rel Webb — who, by the way, had left the city, but before he went had done something that might be taken as indicating a wish to wipe out the past and "start square." This was to send to all the fellows and girls, even to Captain Jack, a sort of P. P. C. card — Jeff Bussey said, a double-barrelled one.

The card announced that Rel had passed the entrance examinations for Princeton. It further stated that he was "with Saxer & Co., Stocks

and Bonds, 21 Broad Street, New York City." The latter statement seemed to take him out of the way during vacation, and the other one suggested that, after September, he might find enough to do in college to keep him out of mischief. Altogether it looked as if he was through with Millvale for some time.

The sending out of the cards seemed a queer freak on Rel's part. It could not be explained by assuming that he wanted to show he could find employment and pass a college exam, for he knew that no one had ever questioned his ability. The generous thing to believe was, that he meant to hint that he was beginning all over again, with the old quarrels put behind him. And, though not many of the athletes took this view, the bitterest of them were willing to leave the matter as Terry did.

"Sure I wish Rel luck — while he stays away!" said Terry.

Lorimer looked thoughtful. A league game with Doverdale was in progress, and Millvale was at bat, but his attention wandered for a moment from his players.

"I wouldn't mind having a heart-to-heart talk with Rel, about this time," he said.

"With Rel, eh?" chuckled Terry. "Sure, that's not the only heart-to-heart talk that's due.

"'Tis in my mind that Mr. Earle of Derry, the

224 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

lad with the jack-knife, ought to be happening this way," Terry added. "If he cut the ropes to spill us out of the car of the balloon, as we believe he did, 'tis up to him to say, 'Excuse me!' Not that there's any thanks due you for saving his life," Terry suggested, whimsically. "Maybe he thinks his life's of no consequence."

"We were going to look into that business, weren't we? Oh, well, let it rip! If Earle's the sneaking scoundrel he seems to be, I don't want to meet him, even for the sake of punching him!"

Yet they were doing the Derry pitcher injustice. Even while they spoke he was approaching the gym; and five minutes later, leaning from a carriage, he beckoned them to the outer edge of the diamond, his white and haggard face giving assurance that, if he had been slow to communicate with them, it had not been his fault.

"Lorimer, McGrady," he said unsteadily, as they went forward, "I want to tell you — Fourth of July — I cut the ropes of your balloon. I thought it would make you ridiculous — spill you out — as soon as you stepped in. I never thought of the ropes holding long enough to put you in danger — you believe that, I hope?"

"Oh, sure!" the fellows answered.

"Thank you for saving my life, Lorimer!" Earle went on. "I've come as soon as I could, to tell you all this. I haven't been realizing much of anything since the car caught me and took me up.

Just been living in a nightmare, you know. Say you forgive me!"

He was still under a tremendous strain; both his eyes and voice were wild and overwrought, and his hand, as they grasped it, was hot and tremulous.

"That's all right, Earle," Lorimer said, soothingly. "We knew it was only a joke, and there's no harm done, and you want to get back to earth and forget all about it."

"Just as we had forgotten," Terry added. "Why, see here, Earle, if we'd suspected you were such a chump as to let a little thing like that worry you, 'tis we would have hunted you up and given you a swift kick for your foolishness! Sure, if you ever mention it to me again, I'll give you two kicks!"

"Brace up, now, Earle!" Captain Jack cried. With a look of infinite relief on his wasted features, the Derry pitcher had sunk back against the cushions, and his attendant had signalled the driver. "We have a game with Derry coming, you know, and I want Walton to put you in the box, so we can get some practice with that slow drop of yours. Remember, it's all right, and all you have to think of is that game!"

The carriage turned. They had a last glimpse of Earle waving a feeble hand in answer to their friendly farewell.

"Well," Captain Jack said, soberly, "I don't

226 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

regret the way we've settled that business. Do you?"

"Ah, man dear, we have our foolish and our wicked spells — you and me and all the rest, as well as that poor lad," was Terry's quiet answer. "And when the time comes that we're sorry, I can't help thinking we have a right to be forgiven."

Then Terry ran back to the bench. Nobody needed him, just then, but he feared he might be suspected of "preaching" — and there is no suspicion that a live boy will run from harder.

True, he would be needed presently, and needed "the worst kind," for, though Doverdale was in great form to-day, Millvale was crippled by the absence of Tom Bell from first and Phil Kavanagh at short.

Will Chapin was covering first and Sewall Ford played short, with Reed and Elverton in the outfield. They were all good men, the kind that not only accept chances but hunt for them; but the nine was distinctly weaker at the bat, with Tom and Phil out.

Neither nine had scored in the first two innings, for both pitchers had good control, and nobody had been able to make a hit. Now in the third, as Doverdale went to bat, there was a change coming.

Leighton struck out. Feeney drew a base on balls, and Howe hit safely, and then they both

proceeded to get around. Janvrin threw Spike out at first, but Perks drove a neat single to left, scoring Feeney and Howe. Smith was caught stealing second, and the Doverdale inning ended there, with Millvale blanked in her half.

In the fourth, however, Millvale got a show. White and McGrady drew passes. Lorimer scored White on a single past first. Harriott hit a sharp in-field grounder to short, and McGrady thought he could score on it, but was nipped at the plate. Ford and Janvrin were easy outs.

It was in the Millvale fifth with the score two to one against the home team, that Captain Jack "threw away the game." That was what some on the bleachers said. Possibly some of his own nine thought it, but not one said a word.

Clarkson, a Doverdale man, was umpiring. There has always been friendship of the warmest kind between the athletes of the "neighbour cities," Doverdale and Millvale, and the umpire shared it. He was a square, conscientious man, "so straight that he bent backward," but when he had to give a decision against Millvale it hurt him; and so anxious was he to be impartial that, if anything, he might wrong his own team.

Two men were out, when White hit hard and safely and reached second. Captain Ted Leighton thought he knew where Captain Jack would try to place the ball, and he waved his fielders farther out.

228 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

It was a miscalculation. The ball lined out over second, but short of centre field; and second went after it, while Leighton ran down to cover his bag — Perks, at short, backing Howe at third, for they knew White for a base-runner who would take chances.

But Captain Jack in his turn made a miscalculation. He tried to stretch a single into a two-bagger. Back came the ball to Ted Leighton at second, just an instant too soon. Yet it seemed that Jack's slide and Ted's movement toward him were simultaneous, and that the umpire had good warrant for his decision:

"Runner safe!"

"No, sir, beg your pardon!" Ted Leighton cried as he ran up the diamond. "The runner's out! I'll leave it to himself!"

Clarkson wasn't pleased to have his decision questioned, and he scowled at the Doverdale captain.

"Back to your —" he began. But Captain Jack spoke up before he could finish the order.

"Captain Leighton is right, sir," he said. "I slid short, and he tagged me out."

"Decision reversed — runner out — side out!" the umpire said, grumpily. And that meant that Horace White's run didn't count, and that the score was still two to one in Doverdale's favour.

Yet it was fated, perhaps as a reward for honesty,

that the visiting team should never again be dangerous. Lorimer had it at his mercy. In the sixth and seventh and eighth, Doverdale had men on bases, but inability to hit at the right time spoiled her chances.

The last of the ninth came. Excitement was at white heat. It looked like a defeat, but Millvale had turned defeat into victory so many times that her friends were still hopeful.

"Hall hup for Millvale!" boomed January Jones, waddling back and forth in a state as near nervousness as he had ever been known to show. "Hall hup and 'oller, for 'ere's where we wax 'em! Mr. Scorer, you want to be ready to put down height or nine runs, ye know!"

"I'd give a hundred dollars to see the boys win!" groaned Seth Lanard to May. "Seems as if they'd ought to, after Jack went out of his way to help the other fellows!"

"He didn't go out of his way, Mr. Lanard!" May answered, quickly. "He went the only way Jack Lorimer could go! And I'd sooner see him lose every game than win by lies!"

"Well, maybe, guess you're right," the old man replied. "Here they be. We'll soon know, anyway!" And he stood up and began to roar encouragement as Reed went to the bat.

Reed drew a base on balls. Elverton struck out. Chapin hit a sharp liner to left, and the cheers were deafening. Two men on bases and one

230 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

out, and White followed his orders with a clean sacrifice.

"Your turn to do it, Terry!" Captain Jack said as McGrady took his bat and started toward the plate.

"Sure, if I don't do it, Jack, you'll have to!" Terry answered.

Yet in Terry's mind there seemed to be no hurry about it. Never had he been cooler. The only sign of excitement was the way his jaws set on a bit of toothpick; but he chewed no harder upon it when his first "swipe" failed and Clarkson called, "One strike!"

Two strikes and two balls on him. Terry's staunchest admirers began to look doubtful.

Then he found it, just the ball he had been looking for. He met it fairly and planted it between first and second, and Reed and Chapin scampered home.

Three to two! Captain Jack had thrown the game away, some people had said — and yet Millvale had won!

CHAPTER XXVIII

TOURNAMENTS ON LAND AND WATER

SOMETIMES in Millvale, as in other places, there are weeks when there seems to be little to do but make plans; and such a week was that in which Lorimer's fellows met Captain Don Walton's for the second time.

Derry's star battery, Earle and Crawford, had come back into the game, but Millvale won by four to two — perhaps because Derry was without a mascot, Black 'Rastus having gone West with Mr. Danvers. And a day or two after that event the plan-making began, with a call from Captain Rob Marr of Roxbridge.

"Wanted to talk with you about the schedules," Marr began, while Lorimer was leading the way to a shady place. "In the suburban league, you remember, we agreed that each nine should play three games with every other, thirty games in all. Well, twenty-three have been played, Millvale winning eight, Roxbridge six, Doverdale five, Derry three, and Winterton one — seven more games to play — and we've got a fighting chance, yet."

232 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

Lorimer smiled and nodded.

"Now about the other schedule, the county high school championship series, that we challenged you to last January," Marr went on. "Remember we agreed to play one or three games of hockey, one or three of basket-ball, one or three of baseball, and one or three of football, and to row one or three races."

"I remember," Lorimer said.

"Well, we played three hockey games, two won by you, one by us; one basket-ball game, which you took; and rowed one boat race, in which you beat us. We agreed that the three baseball games on the suburban league schedule should count on our special schedule also, and of those we've each taken one. That makes five points for you to two for us."

"Yes." What was Marr driving at now, Jack wondered.

"Now I tell you, Jack, we've got more than a chance in that county championship series!" the Roxbridge captain argued, earnestly. "If we win that third game of baseball, we'll have you dead to rights! We shall win three times at football! There'll be no seasoned players, except you and Bussey, in the new Millvale High team which will play those matches, while Roxbridge High will have the strongest team in five years! See?"

"I'm looking hard," Jack answered.

"Why, if we win this third baseball game, that,

with the two points we already have and the three football matches we're going to win, will give us six points to your five!" Marr explained.

"You're a pretty good chicken-counter, Rob," Lorimer commented. "But suppose we should hatch out some poultry ourselves?" And then the absurdity of the thing, this claiming matches that had not been played, struck him hard, and he laughed until the Roxbridge captain began to look a little angry.

"Oh, it's all right, Rob," Lorimer gasped at length as he wiped his eyes. "Since we're fated to lose, it seems, I don't know any crowd of fellows I'd rather have win. But you had something to suggest, hadn't you? Been thinking of some way to let us down easy?"

"Well, I was going to offer you a chance to tie the series," Marr responded, grumpily. "I thought we might enlarge the schedule and play a game of water polo. If you won that, and we won the other points I'm reckoning on, we'd be six to six, and we could play off the tie in any way you say."

In spite of the ridiculous ground on which it was put forward, Lorimer liked the suggestion. Water polo would be a novelty. As such, it would interest the club's backers, and give the players a change of exercise — something for which a wise trainer is always looking out. And then again, it would keep the Roxbridge fellows working and

234 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

hoping, and, though he believed Roxbridge was as good as beaten already, he was willing to let them run as far as they could stretch their rope.

"I don't admit your reasoning for a minute, Rob," he said, "but, so far as I'm concerned, I'll agree to the water polo. Might as well make it a sort of aquatic tournament, while we're about it, and have a tug-of-war and a swimming match for the juniors, eh?"

Marr beamed with gratification.

"Good enough!" he said. "I think it'll be fair to everybody, for we haven't put in any special practice, and you may be better in the water than we are. I ought to tell you, though," he added, "we'll probably use a fellow named Kimball, Fred Kimball, who has just moved to Roxbridge from Boston. He says he's a wonder at water polo and everything else, and —"

"Fetch him along! Come next Saturday, if you want to," laughed Lorimer. And then, as Marr started happily for home, Captain Jack lounged over to the tennis-court and found some more original schemes awaiting rehearsal.

"Jack," May began, "we're talking of a tournament."

"Another tournament, eh? Well, talk away, child," Lorimer answered, stretching out lazily in the shade. "You know I like to listen, whatever you talk about."

"The girls in Doverdale have a tennis club,"

May went on. "Marion Woodside's organizing one in Roxbridge, and why shouldn't we have the clubs over here for two or three days?"

"Yes, why shouldn't we?"

"You might open the gym for a dance, one evening," May suggested.

"And have January sing 'The Star Spangled Banner' at intermission," added Jack. "Or we might lock the doors and open the wildcat's cage, and have an obstacle race — prize to the girl who goes farthest and climbs highest."

"You'll back us up, won't you, Jack?"

"You know I will — and so will all the rest of the fellows.

"Have to be brushing myself up to shine in that tournament, won't I?" he went on. "Let's see, what is it you call a 'volley'? Where you strike at the ball six times before you hit it, isn't it? Or do you call that a revolver? I'm a little weak on technical terms, I'm afraid. What does 'love — 30' mean? Will there be that many girls for me to love, anyway?"

"But what are we girls going to do for our own boys, who have been so nice about tennis, these last few weeks?" May asked.

"Love — 30," Jack answered, as if absent-mindedly. But he laughed, opened his eyes, and straightened up, when May reached out to pinch him.

"I don't know what you mean by that," he

236 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

said. "Virtue is its own reward, isn't it? I've never seen any of our fellows shedding tears on his way to the tennis-court. In fact, I'd rather come here myself than saw wood."

"I don't think that's funny," pouted May.

"I know it. It's foolish. Too hot to be serious, you know. But say we try all over again — quick, before my brain fries on the other side! You were speaking about a tennis tournament, for one thing. Well, it's a good idea. We'll help."

May nodded. "But what about the — well, call it the Millvale testimonial?" she said.

"Your club wants to give some kind of entertainment for the boys?"

"That's what we were thinking."

"Demands considerable meditation, doesn't it?" Jack closed his eyes and leaned back again.

"Call it a Midsummer Night's Dream," he said, after a few moments' silence. "Just take up the net and hang Chinese lanterns around this court. Make it a costume party, with the restriction that only outdoor and summer costumes shall be worn."

"But where does the 'dream' come in?"

"Won't you be there?"

May blushed and smiled.

"I'd like to have our party here in the court," she said. "And of course we could make it very pretty, if we carried out your idea. But a costume party means that a lot of money will be spent by people who can't afford it, and I want to give

my friends pleasure without putting them to an expense that will spoil the flavour of it."

"Good girl!" Jack murmured, fondly. "You're right, as you always are. No, I take that back. You make a mistake right at the beginning. It's the getting together of people who know and like each other, that makes a party a success — just the getting together! Set them down in this tennis-court, or at the top of the Marshall Hills, or in a dory on the Atlantic Ocean, and they'll be satisfied with each other's looks and find ways to entertain each other. Any kind of a dinky picnic — "

"Well, we can have a common picnic, if we don't think of anything else!" May broke in.

But Lorimer disputed that at once. They might have a picnic, of course, but it wouldn't be a "common" one, for Millvale events weren't that kind.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE TUG - OF - WAR BOTH WON

THERE was more than once, after Lorimer and Marr agreed on the water polo game, when it almost looked to Captain Jack as if he would have to carry the Millvale end himself. So many of the fellows were out of town that it was hard to make up a team, and there was little time for practice.

Then almost at the last minute Elverton, one of the forwards, lamed his shoulder and Jeff Bussey had to be sent for — a better man, but one who had missed even the small amount of training the team had had.

Still, the game is simple enough, and, since it was to be played in open water, Lorimer and Marr had modified the American rules — which are best adapted to swimming-pool matches — with a view to easing the players as well as interesting the spectators.

For instance, they added the English feature of a penalty throw from the four-yard line, in case of a foul. And they made the floating goals — which must be touched by the ball, to count for a score — two feet wide above the water, instead of one foot,

providing, also, that if the goal was touched by the ball in the hands of a player two points should be counted, while a thrown ball that struck the goal should be good for one point only.

The course, marked by flagged buoys, was thirty by twenty yards, the centre coming opposite the end of the boat-house float. Inside such limits there was room for clever swimming — nor did Millvale wish that Roxbridge should do less than her best.

“ Bring the boys over and give them a chance to get used to our superior quality of water! ” Lorimer had telephoned Marr. And, realizing that he and his players ought to be better acquainted with the scene of the match, the Roxbridge captain made an appointment for his team, and kept it promptly.

With some interest Captain Jack looked for Kimball, the new fellow Marr had spoken about. He proved to be short and thick-set, snub-nosed and freckled, with small gray eyes that looked green in some lights, and a big mouth — which he used continually.

Marr seemed rather shy of introducing him. But Kimball wasn't bashful, and in two minutes, more or less, he had made the whole crowd acquainted with some of the wonderful things he had done.

“ Used to play water polo with the Neptune Swimming Club,” he said. “ I was the captain,

240 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

one season, and the players said we had the strongest team that ever went into the pool. That was years ago, and I suppose I'm kind of out of practice, but I reckon I'll be able to show you some things, yet!"

"Glad to have you," was Lorimer's quiet answer. "There's nobody on the Millvale side who knows it all." And though the rest of the Roxbridge fellows looked rather sick, Kimball took that as calmly as if to say that he did know it all, so what was the use of denying it?

There was not much talk between hosts and guests, however, for the Millvale fellows were bound to give their visitors a chance to practice unwatched. For the benefit of all, Lorimer and Marr repeated the special "ground rules" — Kimball breaking in with advice from time to time, though nobody paid any attention to him. But that took only five minutes or so, and Captain Jack was on the point of leading the way from the float, when York, one of the Millvale backs, came up hurriedly.

"Say, Jack, did you know Phil Kavanagh can play?" he cried.

"Can play? How's that? I don't understand you, George."

"Why, it seems that Mr. Bird, his employer, has gone away for ten days, and told Phil he may have to-morrow and next week for himself, all but the time it takes to make two short trips. What

I'm thinking of is, that Phil will feel as if he had a right to take a few hours for sport — and he's a stronger swimmer and would play a better game than I would. Why not use him instead of me? "

Kimball of Roxbridge gasped and looked from one to the other.

" Got this all fixed with him? " Lorimer asked smilingly.

" No, but I know Phil would like to play if he could do it without crowding anybody out — and, if I offer to drop out, I don't see why the thing can't easily be arranged."

" Well, we'll hunt him up and have a talk with him. See you to-morrow, fellows," he added to the Roxbridge group.

Nobody in the Millvale crowd seemed to find anything strange in York's generous retirement to the background, and most of Roxbridge could understand and appreciate it; but Kimball was still under the spell of surprise.

" There's a chump for you! " he said, as their hosts turned away. " Putting himself out of a game he's trained for, because by chasing around he's been able to find what may be a better man to take his place! "

" You think York's a chump, do you? " Marr answered. " Well, York's Millvale, clear through. Probably every man in their team is always looking out for a better man than himself, and ready

242 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

to put him forward. And that's why Millvale wins games!"

Yet of course this didn't signify that everybody wanted Millvale to win. Of the spectators who gathered near the boat-house on the following afternoon, two at least were unfriendly, and they were Millvale fellows at that — Jim Fitzpatrick and his younger brother.

The sports were to begin at four o'clock, by which time the sun was off the water and threatened no one's comfort on land. The junior swimming race was first on the programme. Then came the tug-of-war, and last the game of water polo.

Fitz was sure that none of these performances would amount to much. He said so frequently and loudly. Though the athletes had had chances enough to settle him, even to put him in jail, they had refrained — perhaps for about the same reason that one hesitates to step on a bug — and it was his nature to repay their forbearance, now, by handicapping their sports as much as his tongue would let him.

He was near enough to be heard by the swimmers when they started down the float, and by Mains, who sent them off, and he taxed his ingenuity to say disagreeable things. But no one noticed, and finally Fitz got discouraged and devoted himself to smoking and watching the race.

To be frank about it, it was not much of a race. Nobody seemed to be in his best form, and the speed was nothing extraordinary, and though there was a pretty brush between Tom Lorimer and Jack Ellis, as they rounded the turn, Britton of Roxbridge shot ahead of both of them in the stretch, and finished the winner by fully four yards with Roger Ahearn second.

"If I had a six-year-old that didn't know more about swimming pace than those four do," sneered Fitz, "I'd put him in the home for the feeble-minded!"

"With the rest of the Fitzpatrick family," added Ted Leighton of Doverdale.

Fitz had not known that Ted was standing by, and it came as an unpleasant surprise. Ted was Lorimer's friend, and Ted could break the critic in two, if he happened to take a notion. So Fitz made no answer but a scowl — and edged over to the opposite side of the float, where there seemed to be nobody who would try to muzzle his tongue.

"That's a fool way they've got things fixed for their tug-of-war!" he began.

The goals were about fifty feet apart. In the centre of the space between, four railroad sleepers or ties were strung along in a broken line — a sleeper, a two-foot chain, another sleeper, a rope three or four yards long, and, at the end of that, two more sleepers, joined as the first two were.

244 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

"Those fellows aren't going to rope themselves up at all!" Fitz added in deep disgust.

He was right there, for the contestants thought they had devised a better way to prove their strength and skill. What it was to be was soon shown when they ran down the float and with a few strokes reached the line of sleepers — White, Janvrin, Chapin, and Collins for Millvale, Bancroft, Akers, Johnson, and Foster for Roxbridge.

Two to each sleeper, the Millvale fellows threw their left arms around two of the sleepers and faced toward their goal. Facing the opposite goal, the visitors hugged the other two sleepers, tensely awaiting the signal.

Bang! Mains's revolver cracked, and in an instant the struggle began. In another instant the people who were watching one side alone had jumped to the conclusion that it was ended.

"By Jove!" cried Fitz, "Millvale has won already!"

"Rats! You're crazy!" young Fitz retorted. "Roxbridge has won, you mean!"

And one was as nearly correct as the other.

The sleepers were fairly hissing through the water, propelled by sturdy fellows who were swimming all they knew. So absorbed were they in the thought of the goal that they almost reached it before any other thought entered their minds.

Then the same idea seemed to strike every member of the double quartet at once. Every man

chopped his stroke and glanced over his shoulder. And then every man grinned — and a mighty roar of laughter rose from the crowd on the bank.

The middle rope between the sleepers must have parted, gently, too, in the first moment that strain was put upon it. Millvale had towed her two sleepers to the Millvale goal, and to the Roxbridge goal had Roxbridge swum with hers!

It was a funny situation, and the friends of the teams — and the teams themselves — enjoyed it heartily; probably more than the Fitzpatricks, who took it in the malicious and mean-spirited way that really spoils humour and deadens laughter.

"Ho, ho, ho, ho!" Fitz yelled. "Healthy swimmers they are, that didn't know whether there was anything behind them or not! Talk about their racing, they couldn't even catch their own breath!"

"It's a good thing they couldn't catch yourn, by gum!" growled a voice beside him; and, turning swiftly, Fitz looked into the stern, contemptuous face of old Seth Lanard.

"Say, let's go over here," Fitz muttered, fairly scared off by the scorn Mr. Lanard's eyes expressed; and once more the two fellows moved.

Fitz was discouraged. Every time he had uttered a mean remark it had come back to him with interest. He had little or nothing to say while the sleepers were being roped again — in so

246 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

thorough a fashion, this time, that they could not possibly separate — and he was silent while the tug-of-war went on for eleven long minutes, a tug indeed, and was finally won by the Millvale team.

Then the goals were reset, now at a distance of twenty yards, and as a dozen fellows, Millvale in red and white trunks, Roxbridge in blue, ran down from the boat-house, young Fitzpatrick stared with reawakened interest and spoke with a trace of excitement.

“ The water polo, now! ” he said.

But Fitz, pulling hard at his cigarette, cast a glance around, as though he expected to see somebody who would say something vicious, and answered never a word.

CHAPTER XXX

FOUL PLAY THAT DID NOT PROFIT

MILLVALE			ROXBIDGE	
Bussey	}	<i>Forwards</i>	{ Wales	}
McGrady			{ Russell	
Lorimer		<i>Half-back</i>	Marr	
Kavanagh	}	<i>Backs</i>	{ Catherwood	}
Harriott			{ Kimball	
Bell		<i>Goal-keeper</i>	Trask	

"SURE I'm glad to get into the water!" Terry muttered to Jack, as they went down the float. "And I'm hoping Kimball's mouth is soon too full for utterance!"

The new man from Roxbridge had kept his tongue going ever since the team arrived. He was a stranger, and their friends seemed to have accepted him, so the Millvale players could not say much by way of criticism; but they were heartily sick of his "blow" and bluster, which within the boat-house there was not much chance to escape.

The captains tossed for goals, and the teams swam to their respective positions, York and Karrison, the two reserve men, waiting on the float for an emergency call; the judges at goal stationed themselves in boats at either end of the course;

248 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

Mains, the referee, threw the ball in at centre from the end of the float, and the contest was on.

Instantaneously the four forwards, well backed by their halves, swam toward the ball. Wales of Roxbridge proved the swiftest, and he reached the ball half a length in front, passing it swiftly sideways to Russell, who, with the ball between his arms, dribbled it on, tricking Terry neatly and converging toward the centre, looking out all the time for a good chance to pass the ball.

Roxbridge rooters were yelling themselves hoarse. It looked as if their side was going to score at the start. But Captain Jack was shadowing Russell, and all at once, with a lightning-like sprint, was upon him.

Too late, Russell tried to make a pass. Even as he raised the ball, his arm was seized, he was ducked under, and Lorimer had it — and with a clever back-throw had passed it on to Bussey, who had foreseen the manœuvre and was ready. Surging on his way Jeff went until Marr closed in upon him.

Before Marr could get within arm's length, however, Jeff sent the ball swiftly to Terry, who was off with it like a flash. When Kimball seemed likely to be dangerous, Terry swept the ball back to centre with a clever side-pass, and Jeff found himself in front of the Roxbridge goal, in a good position to shoot.

The ball was in his palm. Raising it with his

right hand to the side of his head, he drew his knees up, and with his left arm outstretched made ready. Bringing his left arm back sharply, he threw out his right and shot his legs downward.

At the same moment he was seized by Catherwood and shoved under.

The water filled Jeff's eyes, his ears, his mouth, and he came up gasping — came up to find his comrades clapping him on the back and his friends on the shore cheering. He had scored a goal, and already his side was ahead.

Breathing hard, the players swam back to their goals. Gaining possession of the ball, Referee Mains prepared to throw again.

Eager to avenge their defeat, the Roxbridge forwards swam down upon the ball at terrific speed as soon as the whistle blew, and literally tried to force their way by sheer weight and pressure.

"Go it, Roxbridge!" yelled Fitz from the bank. But that was for his own satisfaction, for everybody else was yelling too.

By a supreme effort Terry reached Russell and pushed him under, hand on chest, as the ball flew. Lorimer and Kimball fought desperately for the advantage, and Marr, racing up and seizing the leather, sent it swinging toward goal, where Harriott, hard pressed by Catherwood, relieved by a huge punt toward the opposing goal.

A swirl of water there, a rush of lithe and sinewy forms, an intermingling of caps, red and

250 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

white and blue — then a long punt at goal, and a well-earned breathing-spell as Trask caught and relieved by a throw to centre — and so the game went on.

It was a clean game. The players on both sides battled bravely, giving and taking hard knocks with great good humour, and fouling seldom. Trask, the Roxbridge goal-keeper, seemed ever on the alert, fielding the ball most cleverly; and though, thanks to his fine support, Tom Bell had less to do, his clean clearances won plenty of applause.

Kimball, the fellow who knew it all, was about the only offender. It is a foul to carry the ball under water, or to tackle an opponent unless he has the ball, or is within four feet of it — and the self-named expert did both these things. They earned two free throws for Millvale, and only hard luck prevented scores.

But there was much brilliant play in the eight minutes of the first half, and it was all exciting. A fine combination movement led to Millvale getting through again before the whistle blew, and a grand shot by Captain Jack placed the home team two up, the score at half-time being two goals to nothing.

"Looks to me as though Roxbridge is licked!" Fitz commented, gloomily. But his brother wouldn't have it that way, because he didn't want it so.

"Oh, they'll get their second wind, and then they'll make things hum!" he prophesied. "This Lorimer gang may go all to pieces in the second half. Wish I knew of some way to break 'em up!" he added, maliciously.

"Pity you're not playing with Roxbridge, since you're so anxious she should win," Fitz answered. "It ought to be easy enough for a Roxbridge player with a little nerve to put his side on top."

Out of the corner of his eye Fitzpatrick had noted the approach of Kimball, the Roxbridge back, who in the five minutes of resting time had wandered up the float — partly to avoid his captain, who wanted to know whether his two fouls were due to ignorance or whether they meant that he had lost his head. Fitz had purposely raised his voice a little, and now he noticed rejoicingly that Kimball, overhearing, had halted a minute at the head of the float to see if the speaker would explain himself.

"Well, if you were a Roxbridge player, how would you put your side on top!" young Fitz growled. He did not fathom the bit of byplay, but he was curious on his own account.

"Put Lorimer and Bussey out of business, of course!" was Jim Fitzpatrick's reply. "They're playing the whole game for Millvale!"

Kimball walked thoughtfully down the float. He had not looked at them again, but Fitz hoped that his suggestion would bear fruit. He knew

252 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

the Kimball kind of player pretty well. Such a chuckle-head will jump at almost any proposition that has "win" at the end of it.

Meanwhile Captain Jack and his fellows, sitting or lying around the float in the easiest attitudes they could find, were by no means confident of success.

"That's a good team of Marr's," Lorimer told Kavanagh, who seemed a little inclined to under-rate their adversaries. "Seems to me it's as good as ours, every bit. We've scored, and they haven't, I grant you, but that doesn't prove we're world-beaters or they're failures. If we don't all play the game every minute of the eight, just as we have been doing, this second half may tell a different story.

"Hark! There's Lou's whistle," Jack added. "Time to get in again, boys — and bully for us!"

Once again came a fierce and sweeping rush for the ball. Wales and Bussey reached it at the same instant, but Jeff won the struggle for possession, and swept the ball to Terry, who was away in a moment.

Marr sprinted and took it, but the nimble Millvale forwards dodged and wheeled and kept on reaching. In a trice Jeff had the ball again, not five yards from the Roxbridge goal.

He turned on his back. But when he was in the very act of shooting, Kimball dashed forward. It was the chance of war. Jeff might take aim,

release the ball and score, or the Roxbridge player might seize him and sweep it from his grasp. Tense excitement reigned.

But all in an instant, flinging himself backward, Kimball lashed out with his legs. One foot, the right, caught Jeff a savage blow in the pit of the stomach. With a stifled groan, Jeff dropped the ball and sank.

That kick, though seen by only one or two, was guessed at or suspected by half the spectators, and a roar of rage and disappointment arose from the crowd as Phil Kavanagh was seen to be supporting Jeff and helping him toward the float.

"Take him out! Take him out!" yelled a score of voices. It was not Bussey they meant, but Kimball, who pretended not to realize that anything out of the common was going on — who, indeed, had seized the ball when Jeff dropped it, and swum toward the Millvale goal.

But this piece of impudence was a little too much for even Tom Bell's self-control. Gripping the fellow by the neck as he came within reach, Tom twisted him around and shoved him away — hard.

"Get out of this, you cur, before I drown you!" Tom cried, as Kimball's head went under water.

Meantime Mains's whistle was sounding continuously.

"Leave the water, Kimball!" he had ordered. But the Roxbridge fellow took no notice.

254 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

"Leave the water, I say!"

But Kimball moved very slowly. Perhaps he was water-logged, had swallowed too much of the lake when Tom Bell pushed him under. Seeing his action, or lack of it, Marr and Catherwood seemed all at once, without exchanging a word, to come to a conclusion as to what they ought to do.

Swimming toward him, they gripped his arms, one on each side, and propelled him to the float.

"Better make for home as fast as you can travel!" Marr growled as he released his hold. "You're liable to get your head knocked off, if you hang around here!"

But as he started up toward the boat-house Kimball decided to wait a few minutes. Hardly any one outside the teams knew him or would recognize him in street dress, and before the teams were out of the water he could get his revenge.

Not on Tom Bell, or Marr, or any of the players — oh, no! The one he wanted to "come up with" was a fellow he didn't even know the name of — the fellow who had suggested that he put Jack and Jeff out of business.

Never suspecting that retribution was hot after them, the two Fitzpatricks, standing near the water's edge at the shore end of the float, were eagerly discussing the possible consequences of Kimball's foul assault.

"York's their spare man. He'll go in in place

of Bussey. And he's slow," young Fitz commented.

"If Bussey had that kind of stomach-ache at home in Four Corners, people would think he'd been eating green apples!" grinned the other. Next moment, though, his grin faded, for, glancing around at a sound behind him, he found himself looking into the eyes of Oscar Stacy.

"Think it's funny?" Stacy said.

Fitz made no reply.

"If you do, I'll try a few kicks on you, so you can have a chance to laugh real hard," Stacy added grimly.

As the brothers stood — in solemn silence, now — watching the little group on the float, suddenly it was scattered by the sound of the whistle. The teams slipped into the water, York replacing Bussey, with Kerrison for Kimball, and took their positions for the penalty throw that was due to Millvale.

There was a hush as Terry carried the ball to the four-yard line. Slowly his arm went up, his hand clutching the leather sphere. Smack! It landed against the goal. Now Millvale had scored thrice, and the game seemed as good as won.

But, as play began again, Roxbridge scored by a sudden desperate rush following a throw from a conceded corner. It was a brilliant play. It revived the fading hopes of the supporters of Rox-

256 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

bridge, and it caused the Fitzpatricks to smile at each other joyously.

Alas! That smile was a "weather breeder." While still it lingered, something that seemed to weigh a ton descended on Jim Fitzpatrick's back, pushed him forward half a dozen steps to where the water rippled up to meet the land, and slammed him face downward into Lily Lake.

"Try to get me into trouble, will you?" a voice growled in his ear. But as he struggled to his feet, soaked to the skin, gasping for breath, and red with rage, he saw no one whom he could identify as his assailant.

Stacy, to be sure, was standing where he had been, grinning cheerfully, and Fitz glared at him suspiciously.

"Did you do that?" he yelled.

"No, I didn't," Stacy answered. "It suited me first-rate, though, and you can hold me responsible if you want to."

"Here, Jim! Say, Jim! I think it was that Roxbridge fellow who got put out of the game," young Fitz explained. "I didn't know him for sure, but it looked like him. He dashed into you and then ran up the bank again."

Fitz was climbing the bank himself by this time, though skirting the edge in a way that would enable him to avoid the crowd. He hadn't gained much, after all, by setting that Roxbridge idiot on to make a personal attack!

"Guess the game's about over," the younger brother suggested as he glanced backward.

It was — but there was one wild moment yet to come, when Terry, after getting inside the four-yard radius, pushed the ball sideways, dived beneath Catherwood's extended arm, recovered the ball, and slammed it up against the goal for another tally. Roxbridge was hopelessly beaten, four to one.

Yet Marr and his players took it pleasantly, like the square fellows they were, and Rob Marr, indeed, found in the result a special consolation.

"I'm rather glad of this, you know, Lorimer," he said. "This ensures that tie in our county high school championship series."

"Yes?"

"Yes," the Roxbridge captain nodded. "You've won six points now to our three. The three football games, to be won by us, will make us six to six, and then we'll have to play off the tie!"

Lorimer chuckled. Marr's certainty that Roxbridge would win all the football games was the funniest thing he had heard lately. But the visiting captain didn't dwell on the subject at this time, for a matter closer to the present was in his mind.

"I hope you don't hold us accountable for that fellow Kimball's dirty work," he said, anxiously. "I know I was a fool to let him on the team, but his talk fooled me into thinking he was a star player and —"

258 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

"Oh, we don't blame anybody but Kimball himself," Lorimer interrupted. "Guess Jeff's all right, now. We're all pretty tough, you know!"

"I cal'late the hole he kicked in me has healed over," said Jeff, with one of his wide, slow smiles. "Don't ye worry, Marr! I've played with ye often enough to get acquainted with Roxbridge tactics, and I know them ain't 'em!"

CHAPTER XXXI

WOUNDED IN A GOOD CAUSE

SPEAKING of "tactics," there was no nine in the suburban league that would do anything unfair — in fact, aside from the trouble with Earle and Crawford of Derry, there had been no hint of unpleasantness, since the opening of the series — but, except in Doverdale, where the whole city was behind the team, most of the nines had "troubles of their own."

Of recent weeks, Roxbridge seemed to have joined the Doverdale class, for Principal Horton, always before unfriendly to the athletes, had acted very different since Jack and Terry restored his nephew. Perhaps that sense of universal backing helped to account for the fact that, in the third game of the suburban league series, Roxbridge had defeated Millvale five to two — thus, as Rob Marr reminded Lorimer at the aquatic tournament, giving Roxbridge three points in the county championship series.

Just at present, the enemies of Millvale were not very active and things seemed to be running pretty smoothly. It was the Winterton nine that was

260 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

catching most of the bricks, for Jake Stein and his gang were unremitting in their enmity. Earlier in the season they had deprived Ned Parkhurst's fellows of their diamond, a trick that set back the whole schedule, and after the nine found another it was certain that, whoever else attended games, the hoodlums would always be there, and ripe for a row.

And they hated Lorimer as bitterly as they did Parkhurst — as bitterly, say, as Jim Fitzpatrick hated him. Going over to Winterton just before the last game between Millvale and the home team, Fitz soon satisfied himself that Jake Stein was ready to fall in with any plan to stir up a fuss.

"Never was a better time to raise a riot," Stein added. "Parkhurst has been calling down Schriver, his second baseman, and Dame, left field. They're both sore, and I've been stringing wires to 'em. When I pull, they'll dance — or make the others hop! I'll keep 'em kicking at everything, all through the game. It won't be long until Sullivan, the pitcher, will be getting red-headed, you'll see!"

"But that'll help Millvale!" Fitz objected.

"Oh, well, we won't forget to rattle the Lorimer bunch," Stein answered. "That fellow White is pretty easy to upset, and so's Ford. We can get up a fight with 'em ourselves, of course, and we'll try to set 'em scrapping with the other nine. Base-

ball's got a black eye, anyway, here in town, and it won't take much to make a good share of the spectators jump right in and knock the stuffing out of every fellow that wears a uniform!"

"Good enough!" chuckled Fitzpatrick. "Why not round up a few toughs and get 'em drunk, to help make things lively?" And Stein agreed that that was an excellent idea.

Between that time and two o'clock he must have worked hard, gathering and coaching his mob. When the Millvale nine went on the field, appearances suggested that somebody had been opening the doors of the county jail and strewing the contents over a very limited space.

That last was the real difficulty. On this inferior diamond which Winterton had had to fall back upon, spectators must crowd right up on the heels of the players.

"Sure I'm thinking our boys in the outfield will need to pin up their pockets and keep their hands on their watches!" Terry muttered to Captain Jack. "'Twould be facing the audience, and not the diamond, that I'd want to be, for fear of getting sand-bagged!" But of course that was not to be taken seriously, and Lorimer smiled at it.

"We must do our best to keep the peace," he said. "I suppose it's the home team that these vagabonds have a grudge against. Parkhurst and Sullivan and the rest will catch it a good deal

262 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

harder than we shall, so we ought to be able to stand it if they can."

"Use your eyes, man!" was Terry's rejoinder. "Don't you see Fitzpatrick over there with Stein? Birds of a feather! Their claws will be into us, too!"

So indeed it proved, and more than once, in the next hour or two, the friends were reminded of that first game with Winterton, three or four months before. Now, as then, the hoodlums outside the lines did their best to make trouble.

Of the visitors, White at third and Ford at short were slanged persistently, though Elverton, Chapin, and Harriott, in the outfield, by no means escaped annoyance. Sullivan, the pitcher, seemed to be the favourite target among the home players, though with two exceptions all the Winterton fellows got their share of abuse and insult.

The exceptions gave a clue to one condition that had changed since that earlier game. Then the Winterton nine was united. Now it was evident that, thanks to Stein's intrigues, there was lack of harmony.

When a Millvale boy landed on first, he promptly made it his business to get down to second. Of course that frequently involved beating the ball, and Schriver, the second baseman, wanted to protest every steal.

Twice he yelled at the umpire, Howe, of Doverdale; and Howe, who was a big, serious, easy-

going fellow, a good deal like Tom Bell, looked over his head and paid no attention; but the third time —

“Shut up that man or take him out of the game!” said Howe to Parkhurst. After that Schriver was less publicly noisy, but he growled and grumbled at and to his captain, a good deal harder than he played ball.

Yet it was a pretty good game, considering all the handicaps and the unfriendly surroundings. Winterton got a run in the second inning by a base on balls, a steal and a timely two-bagger, but Millvale did not score until the fourth.

Sullivan had been a power, up to that time, but then he became a “mark.” The visitors got seven hits off him, and made them good for five runs.

In her next turn at bat, Winterton squeezed in another tally, but then, Sullivan getting back his grip, the score hung as it was, 5 to 2, up to the eighth.

Chapin slid to second in the sixth, and Schriver came down upon him, slammed him back of the ear with the ball, and stepped on his hand when getting up. It was not an accident, and, though Will made no outcry, he privately promised Schriver a sound thumping after the game.

Fitzpatrick had had very little to say to the players, though as he drifted around he kept his assistant hoodlums’ tongues active. But in the

264 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

seventh his evil genius took him where Stein and the worst of the mob were congregated, up back of third. Horace White was pretty wild by that time, and when he overthrew to first, heard an insulting comment behind him, and, looking around, saw Fitz's grinning face, he promptly put his fist into it, hard.

The umpire pretended not to notice that. But the fact was that things back of third were becoming a public scandal, and, taking a sudden resolution, Captain Parkhurst faced the fellows on his bench.

"Take your bats, boys," he said, quietly. "We're going to clean out that rotten gang over there!"

"What for?" growled Schriver.

"Well, if you aren't man enough to see what for, you can stay right here! Come on, the rest of you! Cripple 'em, or kill 'em, I don't care which!"

Then, though Schriver and Dame stayed behind, Parkhurst and seven more made a charge that the hoodlums would long remember. Down on the mob came the players, bats swinging from side to side, and lucky was the "tough" who did not get at least a stinging crack on the shin.

Scrambling and struggling, falling over each other, trampled on as well as clubbed, Stein's gang made the best of their way from the grounds, with Parkhurst's men in hot pursuit. Clear to the road the pursuers drove the mob; and there,

where there was a chance to run, they made the most of it.

Then Winterton went in for her half, and earned two runs, "to celebrate," as Terry said.

The run-getting stopped at that. Five to 4 in Millvale's favour was the final score. Though Parkhurst was satisfied, for he hadn't much expected to win, he wanted to say a last word about the game.

"Nobody had a fair show," he said to Lorimer. "You know that wasn't my fault, but I'm going to start right in to even things up by punching a few —"

"Oh, that's all right, Ned," Lorimer interrupted. "You evened things with the bats!"

But the hoodlums wouldn't leave it at that. Some of them rallied before Millvale got away from Winterton, and about every fellow in the visiting nine found himself with a fight on his hands.

They met the responsibility cheerfully, for they had been exposed to such foul-mouthed abuse and actual violence as nobody could be expected to put up with; and most of them were winners, though of course they did not escape unscathed. However, as Terry said, the scars might just as well be displayed at the tennis tournament — they were won in a good cause!

CHAPTER XXXII

MISS SECRETARY TAKES UP A DARE

To quote Terry once more, however — this being an utterance of some days later — the best part of the tennis tournament was what happened afterwards. By that intentional “bull,” he meant that the boys enjoyed the picnic more than the two days of tennis.

True, May won the ladies' singles, and May and Jack won the doubles over Roxbridge and Doverdale, so Millvale got all the glory. True, the dance in the gym, on the evening of the second day, was every way delightful. But the boys were “playing second fiddle” in these events, and —

“Sure, when we get the Millvale Tennis Club out in the woods, they'll have to let up on ordering us around, or we'll be tying them to trees!” said Terry.

Therefore the girls were bound to “behave,” for they heard this dreadful threat even while the special trolley-car flew countrywards with its merry load of young folks.

January, armed with a tin whistle, was on the front seat. His idea in going up there was to

persuade the motorman to let him run the car. Somehow that scheme wouldn't work, and the fat boy had to devote his energies to making a noise. Yet there were times — most times — when he could hardly drown the combined chatter of the carload behind him.

Jeff Bussey was in the party, a guest of honour. Phil Kavanagh had been "tried for," but his employer had been so generous about volunteering an extra vacation, only a little while before, that Phil told his friends he'd be ashamed to take a holiday, anyhow.

But, no matter who was missing, it would have been hard to give way to melancholy with January near. The fat boy had just received word that his brother, James Henry, was on the way to this country with their mother and the younger members of the family. They were going to British Columbia, where James Henry had made his home; but they would come to Millvale first, and the fat boy was in the wildest spirits over the prospect of meeting them soon.

"Hi want ma to see a game of baseball, ye know," he said, checking off the items on his stubby fingers, "hand Hi want to show 'er 'ow Hi can swim, and the wildcat, and the Soldiers' Monument, and maybe another game of baseball, and the flag James 'Enry gave the club, and Mr. Ho'Brien's 'ouse, and — and — 'ave Hi left hany-thing hout, what? "

268 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

"Sure, you can show her the city directory, January, and then everything will have to be in," Terry suggested, soberly.

"You've left out Four Corners," Jeff added. "Got to bring the bunch to Four Corners, ye know!"

"Ho yus, Hi'll show 'er that, too!" January cried, pointing off at the right.

It was Echo Gorge he indicated — that being the romantic name given a wide ravine through which flowed a stream that was tributary to Little River. It was spanned by a long trestle, and even while they gazed a train dashed across the bridge, the scream of the whistle waking deafening reverberations. The girls shuddered at the sight and sound.

"You might start your little brothers across on a foot-race, and let her stand at one end as time-keeper and referee," Will Chapin suggested.

"Hi'll go hover it meself," said January. "That's 'ow!"

"Oh, yes, of course, it's easy enough for a boy," Ned Harriott agreed. "It's a pretty drafty place, though, up there on the trestle, and for a woman who had skirts to blow around and bother her, I imagine it would be just about as fierce as it looks."

That sounded a note that always stirred Nora McGrady's fighting blood. The idea that a boy

could do something a girl couldn't do roused her to rebellion at once.

"Pooh!" she said. "What's great about crossing that, for a boy or girl either? Any girl in the tennis club could do it!"

"You couldn't!"

"Yes, I could!"

"Stump you!"

"That settles it!" Nora nodded, and set her lips firmly — and Ned laughed, went to talking with somebody else and forgot all about it. He had not been more than half in earnest, in the first place, and he had given the dare believing that, if Nora undertook the feat, she would begin by calling for witnesses, and then he would hear of it and put a stop to the foolish prank.

But Nora did not forget.

"Go over that trestle — well, I guess!" she said to herself. "I'll go once, alone, to learn the way, and then I'll get them all around to watch, and I'll run across it!"

There would be plenty of time, though. It was early, yet, and the car wouldn't call for them on the return until five o'clock. So she turned her attention to helping disembark at the point they had chosen, and five minutes later the whole party had left the highway and was scrambling up into the woods.

"Time for luncheon?" Terry suggested mildly, as the boys dragged their loads of baskets

270 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

and wraps under the shadow of the great trees.

"Terry McGrady!" his sister cried, fiercely. "You haven't lost the taste of your breakfast, yet! People will think we never have anything to eat!"

"Sure, I don't have much, when you get to the table first," Terry said, reproachfully. "And why do we go to picnics if not to eat? Answer me that, now!"

"Oh!" Nora gasped all at once. She had realized what most of the others had seen earlier, that that brother of hers was joking and teasing as usual, and she flung up her head, did pretty Miss Secretary, and went off to join a group of the younger girls.

Meantime, Mrs. Harriott, who generally accompanied the boys and girls, not so much to chaperon as to "mother" them, — though she seemed more like a big sister, — took a book out of her bag and settled herself comfortably on a rock, with her back against a tree.

"Amuse yourselves, children, for two hours by the clock!" she cried, gaily. "There's no one here I need to watch, and when you want me you'll know where to find me. Come, Terry," she added. "While I read, I can be feeding you with sandwiches."

Terry laughed and lifted his cap. But instead of accepting the generous offer he walked forward to join Rose Ahearn.

"Does any one want to see the famous tree on which a tramp hung himself?" he asked in the tone of a showman. "Who's for the visiting party? Here, May and Jack, march at the head!"

"I wouldn't go there for anything!" was May's firm reply. Rose nodded comprehendingly.

"Of course you wouldn't," she said. "Come along, Terry, and don't be foolish!"

Terry looked at Mrs. Harriott, a look that was a comical, mute appeal for sympathy.

"Foolish! Do you hear?" he said. "Sure I should have invited them to do something desperate — say, walk over to the depot and see the train come in!"

"That would have exposed you to reproaches, just the same," was Mrs. Harriott's smiling reply. "I heard our conductor say that there was some kind of a tie-up beyond at the Junction, and the train we saw would be the last one over that branch for two hours."

Nora started. That would be her chance! She could make her experimental trip across the trestle, come back, summon her friends, and repeat it, within two hours — and, scarcely pausing for a second thought, she slipped away through the woods toward the scene of her "dare."

It was not so very far. Within five minutes or less she reached the narrow clearing through which the track ran. She had not realized, before, how abruptly the track turned toward the trestle.

272 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

Neither had she realized until this moment, when she stood at the near end of the trestle and looked across, how sudden a curve the track took at the other end of the trestle, where it dipped once more into the forest.

But the trestle itself was straight enough. And, with no trains approaching, what did the curves matter? She stepped on the shore end of the bridge and cautiously began her journey across the sleepers.

At the notion that she might fall, Nora gave a little laugh of disdain. She had no doubt of her own sure-footedness. And yet, to be sure, it was windy at that dizzy height, and the sleepers seemed a long way apart. They were rather strides than steps that she took, and when she happened to look down at the green water, far below, she realized involuntarily that, should anything interrupt her stride —

But that was nonsense! She tossed her head, as if to shake the thought away.

She was half-way across the trestle, now. It seemed a longer journey than it looked from the bank, and she was heartily tired of it. She was just on the point of deciding that she would not repeat the trip — she would rest her case with declaring that she had made it — when, far and clear, over on the other bank, she heard a whistle!

Just for a moment she clasped her hands and stood still.



"WITH THE MAD INSTINCT OF A HUNTED THING SHE . . . RACED."

Once more the whistle sounded. Over the tops of the trees she saw a heavy cloud of smoke. The rails began to "sing," the sleepers to vibrate. A train was coming down upon her, and coming fast.

With the mad instinct of a hunted thing she turned her back upon it and raced toward the end from which she had come.

CHAPTER XXXIII

A RESCUE AND A SURRENDER

AT about the same moment when Nora McGrady left her companions, but before anybody realized she had gone, January Jones discovered that he wanted a drink of water.

There was a clear, cold, sparkling spring not far from the picnic ground, and the fat boy was directed to it. But after the first mouthful he turned away with a wry face.

"It's water what's got some taste to it, what Hi want!" he muttered. "Hi'll go down to the bloomink river and get me a drink, what?"

So saying he struck off toward the ravine. There was "taste" and to spare in the water of that stream, for it carried off the chemical waste from a paper-mill. But, since it suited January, and since the errand took him to the very place where he was needed, who shall find fault?

Where Nora was lithe and swift-footed, January was fat and rather slow, and she had started on that desperate return journey before he reached the trestle. He stopped a minute there, planning a way to get down the steep bank, to the water's

edge. By a happy fortune he looked along the track.

In a flash he recognized the girl who was hastening toward him. In the same lightning glance he saw that the train was approaching, and, as the smoke showed, just on the point of leaving the woods and running out upon the farther end of the track. It was almost impossible that, if the engineer saw Nora at the first instant, he should be able to stop before he reached her.

There was no slowness about the movements of the fat boy's mind. He put his hand to his mouth and sent out one of those bull-like bellows of his.

"Miss Nora! Come as far as you can, and then dive hinto the river! Hi'll be there!"

The girl waved her hand to show that she understood. She had regained her nerve by this time, and she could help the fight for her life.

And January? He wasted no words and no time. Just one glance he cast at that steep bank and the shore below, and then he sat down and braced backwards.

"Hi'll slide!" he said.

Then, reaching the bottom a trifle dazed and rather raw, he tore off his jacket, waded in to the height of his shoulders, and cast an anxious eye up toward the trestle.

"Hi could swim better if Hi 'ad me pants off," he muttered. But the next moment he blushed at what he had said, and tried to forget it.

276 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

It was evident that the girl had been seen, and the engineer was doing his best. But still the train came on, and the fat boy, seeing how calmly Nora picked her steps, was seized with a new fear — that she might wait too long.

All of a sudden he put his hands to his mouth again.

"Dive!" he roared.

At the word the girl stepped to the end of the sleepers. Joining her hands above her head, she poised an instant and then shot through the air. And almost at the same instant January was cleaving the water with great strokes toward the spot where she had gone down.

Nobody ever accused January of being a fast swimmer, but he was a strong one, and he knew what to do. He saw as Nora rose to the surface that she was unconscious from the shock, yet he took no risks. Approaching from behind, he fixed a gentle grasp upon her hair, and used his feet and other hand to propel them both toward shore.

With the same gentleness, and blushing furiously, he loosened her collar, when he had succeeded in dragging her out on the bank, and held her for a second, head down, that the water might run out of her lungs. There was evidently no need to stimulate breathing, but he knew she might have struck bottom in that wild dive, and he wished with all his soul for a doctor — or a woman — to take charge.

And the doctor came, from the train itself, rushing down the bank like another locomotive, and very nearly pitching into the water at the foot. January knew him.

"'Ullo, Doctor Barry!" he cried. "Hi'm pleased to see you, sir!"

"Hello, January." The old man righted himself, and glanced at the still figure.

"My word!" he said. "Little Nonie McGrady!" And then, while January went under the bridge and wrung out as much of his clothing as he dared to take off, the doctor busied himself about his patient.

"She's all right," he announced joyfully, a few minutes later. "But how in the name of goodness are we to get her out of here?"

"I can climb, doctor!" Nora managed to gasp.

"Rubbish!" was the old man's irritable answer.

"But scout along, January, and see if you can find a place where we could drag her up this — this double-blistered bank! We must get her home and put her to bed."

There was a place, and the fat boy found it, and, with Nora helping herself, like the brave girl she was, they struggled to the top. A little rest, and they got a little farther; then another rest, and so on; and they were within a few rods of the grove when the fat boy suddenly halted, faced toward the trolley track, and said all in one breath:

"Hexcuse me, good day, Hi'm a-going 'ome!"

278 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

"January!" Nora murmured, "I want you to come with us."

"Hi'll see you 'ang — hexcuse me, Miss Nora, Hi — Hi 'aven't time, ye know."

And the fat boy, who could stand anything but being thanked and lionized, broke into a lumbering trot, the water in his sneakers squelching up around his ankles at every step.

All he wanted now was to reach the gym, rub down, and get on some dry clothing. What he did not want was to meet inquisitive persons who knew him. But an unkind Fate, as at first he thought it, decreed that such a person, and no friend either — Jim Fitzpatrick, in short — should be already a passenger on the car he boarded.

Yet Fitz was singularly changed and different. He uttered no slur, refrained from smiles, and seemed anxious to put himself on good terms. Naturally the fat boy grew all the more suspicious.

"Seen Chap Stanley, lately, January?" Fitzpatrick asked.

"No, sir," was the stiff reply; and January squeezed a little farther over to the opposite side of the back platform.

"Did you know Jake Stein and I are on the outs?" Fitzpatrick went on.

"No, sir."

"He's a bad egg. I'm sorry I ever chummed with him," Fitz added. "He's no friend to Mill-

vale, you know, and of course when I was with him it looked as if I was one of the same kind, eh? Lem Saunders and I talked it all over, yesterday, and we agreed that wasn't right. A fellow ought to stand by his own town!"

January chuckled hoarsely. In all the plots against the Millvale athletes, this cowardly rascal had been as active as he dared to be. To hear him speak as he did, was like hearing a burglar preach on the beauty of honesty, or a drunkard deliver a temperance lecture.

"I s'pose the boys are kind of down on me, eh, January?" the fellow went on in a wheedling tone. "Don't you want to help me square it with 'em? I'll make it worth your while."

Then the fat boy laughed outright.

"You 'aven't got hanything Hi want, Mr. Fitzpatrick," he answered, as he dropped off the car, opposite the gym.

But, as he went, he wondered. It was only a day or two since Fitz at Winterton had been conspicuous amongst the enemies of Millvale. Something must have happened to frighten him or make him feel that he stood helplessly alone. What could it be?

Lou Mains knew. He was smiling over a letter just received from Rel Webb, an apology to Lorimer and all, for whatever had gone wrong between him and them, and an earnest wish for peace in the future.

280 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

" Fitzpatrick's 'eard of that, ho yus! " January chuckled. " It was Webb's money and brains as kept 'im hup, ye know, and now 'e's hon the hout-side, hall alone! But why did 'e hask me about Stanley, what? "

That also was soon explained. Rel had asked Mains to see Stanley and the other imported players and make a settlement with them which should be fair to both sides — pledging his, Webb's, father to pay them whatever amounts Lou said was right.

" Hi think Rel 'e must be a-going to die, ye know! " said January, solemnly.

But Lou laughed and said no. Now that Rel was outside the smoke of battle, where he could see clearly, and now that he had taken time to think, he was really just beginning to live.

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE FIGHTING CHANCE KNOCKED OUT

MILLVALE

Bell, 1b.
White, 3b.
Lorimer, p.
Harriott, r. f.
Elverton, c. f.
McGrady, c.
Janvrin, 2b.
Ford, s. s.
Chapin, l. f.

DOVERDALE

Feeney, r. f.
Howe, 3b.
Spike, 2b.
Perks, s. s.
Moran, l. f.
Upham, 1b.
Merchant, c.
Phillips, c. f.
Leighton, p.

"Just two more games, Jack!" cried Captain Rob Marr of Roxbridge. "Looks as if we'd have a tie to play off, doesn't it?"

"Does it?" said Lorimer, smilingly.

"Why, yes! Or at any rate I consider that we've got a fighting chance. Millvale and Roxbridge have each won nine games, haven't they?"

"That's right."

"Well, you play Doverdale this afternoon, and Doverdale plays Winterton, the last game of all, next Monday. Say Doverdale wins both, we'll still be tied, with Doverdale one game behind us."

"Yes," Lorimer rejoined, still smiling. "But

282 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

don't forget we've got a fighting chance ourselves to win to-day. That would give us ten games and the series.

"You mustn't forget, either, that Winterton is playing ball at present," he added. "Take Parkhurst's fellows on the Doverdale grounds, where they'll get a show, and they'll make Doverdale hustle."

"What do you mean by a 'show'?" Marr inquired. "We haven't played at Winterton but once, and then there was a good deal of cheap talk — but if those fellows are afraid of having their feelings hurt, they ought to be playing marbles!"

"Oh, I don't think they're any more sensitive than they have a right to be. Noise doesn't rattle them, if that's what you mean, whether it's friendly or not, though probably they don't enjoy the filth from a hoodlum's tongue any more than I do. But how would you like to have a foot stuck out every time you ran into the crowd for a fly? Or how would you like to catch a half a brick in the back of the neck? That's what the Winterton proposition simmers down to, fight your way on to the diamond and off, and, if Parkhurst and the others hadn't had pluck, they'd have thrown up the game three months ago!"

Marr nodded as if he understood and was satisfied.

"But suppose Doverdale does defeat you to-day?" he persisted. "You'll be thinking about

playing off the tie with us? Three games on three successive Saturdays, or something like that? "

" I'll be thinking about it," chuckled Lorimer. " Meantime, what about that little matter that concerns our two clubs alone? I mean the special series for the county championship, that you think you're sure of? "

The Roxbridge fellow flushed a little, but he laughed, too.

" Oh, that's as good as nailed down," he said. " We're three points to your six, you know, and when we win the three games of football next fall it'll be six to six, with future chances all in our favour — because Bell and McGrady and Janvrin and Harriott and Chapin and Kavanagh — almost every star performer but you and Bussey — will be out of the school, and you'll have to build your new teams from the ground up.

" But never mind that, now," he chuckled. " I'm here to-day to see you get licked! I want you to get licked, so we can have the fun of playing off a tie! "

Looking at the Millvale diamond, that Saturday afternoon, one never would have imagined that it was the season of vacation and half the friends of the high school athletes were out of town. Millvale, of course, came out in great numbers. But Roxbridge sent as large a delegation as Doverdale — which is saying a good deal — and from Win-

284 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

terton and Derry each came two carloads of shouting enthusiasts.

The fact was that everybody who had kept track of the series was as well aware as Rob Marr himself that this game might or might not settle things. If Millvale won it, she won the championship. If she lost, Millvale and Roxbridge would be tied, with nine victories and three defeats to the credit of each, and there would have to be another series of matches.

So Millvale and Doverdale and Roxbridge, meaning their supporters, were all on tenter-hooks. The crowd wanted the thing settled, and settled quick, and resented even the slight and natural delay there was about getting an umpire.

"We'll take Lou Mains," said Captain Ted Leighton of Doverdale; but Lou shook his head, decidedly.

"Interested party," he said. "Besides," he added with a smile, "want a chance to holler!"

"Is Harry Lee, your friend from Four Corners, here to-day?" Leighton asked.

"No," Captain Jack answered. "Why not ask Catherwood, the Roxbridge catcher, to serve?"

But Catherwood returned a firmer negative than Mains had given.

"I'm prejudiced," he said. "I want Doverdale to win!"

"I'll take my chances with you," was Lorimer's

THE FIGHTING CHANCE 285

smiling reply. But Catherwood shook his head again, and promptly got away.

Finally Parkhurst of Winterton was routed out from his seat in the grand stand, and because he was a good fellow, not because he wanted to, consented to steer the game. It began with Doverdale winning the toss and going into the field.

"There's a feller ain't goin' to get rattled!" chuckled old Seth Lanard, as Tom Bell faced Leighton at the plate. Indeed, it looked that way, as Tom calmly waited for the right thing, and at length, because it hadn't come, got his base on balls.

"Bully!" Mr. Lanard cried. "Now we'll see if he'll steal a base, and then if White'll bring him home!" But May, who sat beside her old friend, smiled as if she felt doubtful.

"Tom isn't the best base-runner in the nine, and Horace isn't the surest hitter. If I'm not mistaken, Jack has told him to sacrifice."

That was what White did, helping Tom down to second. With only one man out, and Ted Leighton seeming rather slow to get control of the ball, it began to look like a run, and Mr. Lanard groaned with nervousness as Captain Jack tapped the plate.

"If Jack don't hit her out, I'll set fire to the gym, I will, by gum!" he muttered. Next moment he laughed from sheer relief, for Jack did hit safely, and Tom moved up to third.

286 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

"Goin' to try a squeeze, you cal'late?" Lanard asked.

"No, I doubt if Tom will risk it. Ned Harriott's a pretty good batter, though, and I think Tom's as good as home."

Indeed, he was there in two minutes more, for Ned lined out one that Spike went up in the air for, but couldn't quite reach. Tom scored and Jack took second.

And then, with only one man out, Lorimer was caught between second and third and run down. The next moment Elverton's fly was gathered in by Feeney.

"Guess the Lorimer luck's been gettin' mislaid!" Mr. Lanard commented rather gloomily. May laughed.

"Oh, we've made a good beginning," was her cheerful answer. "Jack took a chance, you know, and Ted Leighton caught him very cleverly. Somehow I feel it in my bones that Doverdale won't get that run back!"

Nor did she, for in Doverdale's turn at bat nobody went beyond second. And four innings came and ended without any additions to the score.

"Say, this is good ball, by gum!" Mr. Lanard said, with deep conviction, as Janvrin went to the plate to open the fifth inning for Millvale — and May smiled joyously.

Again she smiled as Matt hit hard to left, then,

THE FIGHTING CHANCE 287

helped by a passed ball, took second, and started for third as he heard the crack of Ford's bat.

But Perks made a beautiful stop of Ford's hot grounder, and there was an instant of deep anxiety as the Doverdale shortstop sent the ball to third. Happily for Millvale, the fine stop was more than counterbalanced by a wild throw, and Janvrin not only reached third but came home, while Ford got down to second.

Chapin flew out to Feeney, and Bell drew a pass. Ford made third by a fine slide on Chapin's fly to right, to be caught napping a moment later on Merchant's sharp throw. Bell was thrown out in attempting to steal second on a close play. In the Doverdale half Ford threatened to become the star of the occasion, when he robbed Merchant of a base hit by a running one-hand stop just as later on, in the seventh, he took a grounder from Moran's bat, the kind of ball that burns a hole as it travels, and once more helped to spoil Doverdale's chance of getting into the game.

White opened the sixth with a fine two-base hit, Lorimer struck out, Harriott went out on a grounder well handled by Upham, and Elverton flew out to Feeney.

In Doverdale's half, Leighton came within a hair of breaking the ice with a run for his team. In trying to work the batter on a ball over the inside corner, Lorimer shot one that just grazed the letters on his opponent's shirt front, and Leigh-

288 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

ton walked leisurely down to first base. Feeney's out at first sent Leighton to second; and he went to third as Howe drove a low liner to right field, of which Harriott made a fine running catch. Spike punted down the third base line and Leighton was on his way home like a greyhound, but White, anticipating the bunt, was on the move and, scooping up the slow rolling ball with one hand, he made a perfect underhand throw to first. It was nip and tuck between the ball and the runner, and the umpire hesitated a second before raising his hand and calling "out."

Both teams went out in order in the seventh. In the eighth both teams got men to first. White for Millvale hit for a single and stole second with two out, only to see Leighton make a clever stop of Lorimer's hot grounder headed through the box. Merchant opened with a single for Doverdale, to go down, in a fast double play on Phillips's daisy-cutter to Ford, who played the ball to Janvrin. Leighton was out at first, Bell to Lorimer, who covered the base.

Then came the great finish. The home team went out without reaching second base. With two down, McGrady reached first on a fumble by Howe, but was immediately forced at second on Janvrin's grounder to Perks.

When Feeney opened for Doverdale with a sharp single to left the spectators realized that the Doverdale boys were bound to play hard until the

last man was down. Howe hit a hot grounder that Lorimer played beautifully to Janvrin for a force out; and many thought the umpire should have allowed a double play. Spike lined one into Bell's big glove at first, and with two out Perks reached first on a fumble by Tom Bell.

Was Lorimer for once upset? At any rate, he lost control of the ball and hit Moran on the arm. This filled the bases with Doverdale players, and a worried expression swept like a shadow over the faces of Mr. Lanard and all the Millvale sympathizers.

The spectators rose as Upham came to the plate, swinging two bats, then, tossing one aside, gripped his favourite well up the handle, and tapped the home plate. "Upham! Upham!" yelled the Doverdale rooters in chorus. Then came back the cry, "Lorimer! Lorimer! Jack Lorimer!" After a careful study of his field, Jack shot a fast ball well out and shoulder high. Upham was on his toes and swung for all there was in him. He met the ball on the centre.

The ball was headed for the deep grass in right centre, with Elverton sprinting as he never did before. Three men were speeding around the bases, and it looked like a lost game for Millvale. The ball was sailing high and carrying with a slight wind against it. Elverton raised his head just in time, and with a leap he blocked the ball high over his head with his gloved hand.

290 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

The long run had nearly blinded him, but he was game. Even while off his feet he managed to hook the ball with his bare hand, as it was dropping to the ground. Then he went rolling over on the high grass, ever holding up his hand to show that he had the ball.

Still as death was the crowd, awaiting the decision, for many thought Elverton had taken the ball on the bound. The umpire ran down the field as far as second base. Then, turning about to the stand, he called out, "The game is over."

It was Captain Rob Marr of Roxbridge who called for three cheers for the champions of the suburban league — which meant Millvale, of course — cheers in which the members and friends of all the other clubs most heartily joined.

"My fighting chance has got knocked out, Jack!" Marr said, as he offered his hand. "This settles it! Sorry we can't have the fun of playing off a tie — but if you fellows put up such a game as you've played this afternoon, I'm afraid we wouldn't have gained much glory!"

"When shall we have the flag-raising?" Captain Ted Leighton asked. "Pennant's all ready, you know, and you may as well have the fun of flying it!"

"Oh, any time, any time," Lorimer responded. "You're playing the last game, that with Winter-ton, Monday afternoon, and —"

THE FIGHTING CHANCE 291

"Say Tuesday afternoon for the laurel wreaths, then!" Marr put in.

Captain Jack glanced around at the other captains, Leighton and Walton and Parkhurst.

"Tuesday afternoon let it be!" he said.

THE CHAMPIONSHIP GAME

Milvale		Roundale at Milvale										Mr. Parkhurst	
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Bell	10-1	10-1	10-1	10-1	10-1	10-1	10-1	10-1	10-1	10-1	10-1	10-1	10-1
White	10-1	10-1	10-1	10-1	10-1	10-1	10-1	10-1	10-1	10-1	10-1	10-1	10-1
Lorimer	10-1	10-1	10-1	10-1	10-1	10-1	10-1	10-1	10-1	10-1	10-1	10-1	10-1
Marriott	10-1	10-1	10-1	10-1	10-1	10-1	10-1	10-1	10-1	10-1	10-1	10-1	10-1
Everton	10-1	10-1	10-1	10-1	10-1	10-1	10-1	10-1	10-1	10-1	10-1	10-1	10-1
McGrady	10-1	10-1	10-1	10-1	10-1	10-1	10-1	10-1	10-1	10-1	10-1	10-1	10-1
Jammin	10-1	10-1	10-1	10-1	10-1	10-1	10-1	10-1	10-1	10-1	10-1	10-1	10-1
Ford	10-1	10-1	10-1	10-1	10-1	10-1	10-1	10-1	10-1	10-1	10-1	10-1	10-1
Chapin	10-1	10-1	10-1	10-1	10-1	10-1	10-1	10-1	10-1	10-1	10-1	10-1	10-1
Total	10-1	10-1	10-1	10-1	10-1	10-1	10-1	10-1	10-1	10-1	10-1	10-1	10-1

Grand Run..... 2 Base Hits..... 1..... 3 Base Hits..... 1..... Home Run..... 1..... Passed Balls..... 3..... Wild Pitches..... 1.....
 Bases on Balls..... 2..... Bases on Hit by Pitched Balls..... 1..... Struck Out..... 4..... Left on Base..... 3..... Double Plays..... 1.....

THE FIGHTING CHANCE 293

Dorvalde Mullvale Mr Parkhurst									
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Feeney 1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1
Nowe 1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1
Spike 1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1
Perks 1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1
Moran 1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1
Upham 1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1
Merchant 1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1
Phillips 1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1
Leighton 1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1
Total	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1

Scored by MR. T. H. MURNANE

CHAPTER XXXV

RAISING THE LEAGUE PENNANT

JAMES HENRY JONES, January's brother, had given the club a flagstaff and big silk flag when he was in Millvale two months before, and though, strictly speaking, all these and the grounds besides were the property of the Millvale Athletic Club, there was no fear the Millvale High School nine would be forbidden to fly its championship pennant from that pole.

The only danger seemed to be, as Tuesday afternoon came on, that the boys would have to pull up the pole to make room for the crowd — for there threatened to be a larger turn-out than there had been at the Saturday game. And if Seth Lanard had had his way, it would have been larger still.

Walton of Derry had the pennant in his possession. Mr. Lanard thought it would be a good idea to have it mounted on a wagon and paraded around the city for an hour or two, under the escort of a brass band — which would then come back to the grounds with it.

Walton was more than willing, and they had the scheme all arranged when Captain Jack heard of

it; but he begged them to drop it, and finally Mr. Lanard unwillingly agreed.

"In the first place, the pennant isn't ours until results have been officially declared, and it has been formally presented," Lorimer said. "Next place, we don't want our friends, the good fellows who have fought for it, to think that we're trying to rub it in. Everybody who is really interested knows about our victory. Let them do the crowing!"

But if he couldn't have the parade, Mr. Lanard was determined to have the band anyhow, and it was there on the grounds, and earning its money, an hour before the time set for the ceremony.

Most of Millvale's closest friends were on hand about as early.

Harry Lee had come over from Four Corners, and, to Lou Mains's great satisfaction, had brought along his sister Josie. Legate and Dawson of De Armond's prep. school had come from their homes, a good many miles away. Stacy and Hawkins and the older fellows who belonged to the athletic club had taken an afternoon off, that they might help applaud. And conspicuous in the crowd was Jeff Bussey — leaning on a cane.

"Wanted to get over here Saturday to the game," Jeff explained, "but I had a scrap with a mowin'-machine, ye see, and the machine licked. Oh, shucks, of course a little cut's nothin', but Uncle Isaiah was floppin' around like a hen with

296 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

her head off, worryin' me to keep still for a day or two, and course if a feller's half-decent he's got to try to please his folks."

When they heard about his injury, the fellows drove Jeff into one of the best seats, ordered him to stay there, and volunteered to bring up anybody he wanted to see. Jeff grinned.

"Kind o' like to see January's brother, James Henry Jones!" he said.

"Hi wish James 'Enry was 'ere, ye know!" January responded. "Hall the same," he added, cheerfully, "James 'Enry and ma and the rest of the kids'll be 'ere soon. They're hall a-going West to live, ye know."

"Say, January, while they're here, you bring the whole caboodle of 'em over to Four Corners!" Jeff cried. "We'll turn the young ones loose in the orchard and take your ma and James Henry drivin', and you — well, we'll roll ye down a ledge, and then set the dog on ye!"

January chuckled. He wasn't afraid.

"Stop that noise!" Jeff added with mock severity. "Here's Tom Bell going to begin."

Tom and several others had mounted the temporary platform which had been built around the base of the flagstaff, and now Bell held up his hand as a signal for silence.

"Ladies and gentlemen, friends," he said, "as president of the Millvale High School Athletic Association, I welcome you to these grounds, and I

RAISING THE PENNANT 297

have the honour to introduce Captain Tom Walton of the Derry Baseball Club, who, as secretary of the Suburban High School League, will report the result of the series of games just finished."

Walton went right to the point.

"Five high school teams composing the league," he said, "each playing three games with every other, thirty games have been played. Millvale has won ten, Roxbridge nine, Doverdale seven, Derry three, and Winterton one. I therefore declare the Millvale nine the winner of the championship, and I have great pleasure in requesting Captain Rob Marr of the Roxbridge team, which took the second place in the series, to present the pennant."

Rob Marr stepped forward in his quick, nervous fashion, and laid his hand on the flag which was bent on the halyards, all ready to be raised.

"Captain Jack Lorimer, and fellows of the Millvale nine," he began, "up to last Saturday I thought Roxbridge still had a chance to win this bit of bunting. I can't say that I'm glad she didn't. But I'm sure there isn't a fellow in the other four clubs who, next to his own nine, didn't want to see Millvale come out ahead, for a Millvale win means a fair game and an honest victory, every time!

"Accept this pennant, Captain Lorimer and friends, with the hearty respect and sincere goodwill of your associates in the suburban league.

298 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

We welcome you to our own grounds and we come to yours gladly, knowing we shall receive a square deal and gentlemanly treatment from the first minute to the last."

Captain Jack felt "stumped." He didn't set up to be a public speaker; he had tried, though vainly, to induce Tom Bell to take this whole job off his hands, and he knew he couldn't express himself so gracefully and well as Marr had done. But he squared his shoulders and began.

"Captain Marr, and comrades of the suburban league," he said, "on behalf of my associates I receive this pennant proudly and gladly, glad to win it and proud to have your friendship with it.

"Comrades, I thank you — and I ask Miss Woodside, as a friend of the Roxbridge nine, and Miss Roxton, on behalf of the Millvale nine, to do us the honour to raise the pennant."

Quietly and gracefully Marion and May performed their parts. As the pennant floated from the top of the staff, Rob Marr faced the crowd again, his face aglow.

"Now," he cried, "three cheers for the Millvale champions! Hip, hip —"

There were a good many more than three. They lasted a long time. But when the tumult had ceased, it was Captain Jack's turn once more.

"Friends," he said, "the regulation thing for me to do would be to call for cheers for our generous opponents of Roxbridge, who ranked next to

RAISING THE PENNANT 299

us. Well, they deserve cheers, and so do all the others, and they'll get them. But when I look back over this season I see one club fighting all the time against enemies within and without, losing their grounds, being handicapped in all kinds of ways, but never losing their grit and always putting up a fair, straight, manly game, and I tell you, fellows, it's that club that ought to have the cheers first! Let's give 'em now for Captain Ned Parkhurst and his Winterton nine!"

There is no need to say that Parkhurst and his fellows appreciated that. So did the other players, who recognized the truth of Lorimer's statements. And as for the crowd in general, it sharpened their appetites for more cheering, so that Roxbridge and Doverdale and Derry all got their deserts.

But later, in the gym, where Millvale was entertaining the visiting players and their friends at a little informal luncheon, Marr of Roxbridge came smiling up to Captain Jack and thumped him on the shoulder.

"Hello, you old croaker!" Rob cried. "Remember what you told me one day, when this series was just beginning, that trouble came a-hunting you? Doesn't look as if there was any on your trail to-day?"

Lorimer smiled at his friend and looked around at other tried and faithful friends, almost more in number than the gym could hold.

300 JACK LORIMER'S CHAMPIONS

"Did I say that?" he asked. "Guess I must have been talking a blue streak at the time. No, things look very peaceful, just now. It's a pretty good world!"

THE END.

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